THE CASTAWAY

HALLIE·ERMINIE·RIVES

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THE CASTAWAY

"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence . . . ." *p. 95.*

THE CASTAWAY

THREE GREAT MEN RUINED IN ONE YEAR—A KING, A CAD AND A CASTAWAY

By

HALLIE ERMINIE RIVES

Author of Hearts Courageous, A Furnace of Earth, etc., etc.

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INDIANAPOLIS
THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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May

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TO

POST WHEELER, LITT. D.

My history will furnish materials for a pretty little Romance which shall be entitled and denominated the loves of Lord B. *Byron, 1804*

I hate things all fiction; and therefore the Merchant and Othello have no great associations to me; but Pierre has. There should always be some foundation of fact for the most airy fabric, and pure invention is but the talent of a liar. *Byron, 1817*

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THE CASTAWAY

CHAPTER I

THE FEAST OF RAMAZAN

A cool breeze slipped ahead of the dawn. It blew dim the calm Greek stars, stirred the intricate branches of olive-trees inlaid in the rose-pearl façade of sky, bowed the tall, coral-lipped oleanders lining the rivulets, and crisped the soft wash of the gulf-tide. It lifted the strong bronze curls on the brow of a sleeping man who lay on the sea-beach covered with a goatskin.

George Gordon woke and looked about him: at the pallid, ripple-ridged dunes, the murmuring clusters of reeds; at the dead fire on which a kid had roasted the night before; at the forms stretched in slumber around it—Suliotes in woolen kirtles and with shawl girdles stuck with silver-handled pistols, an uncouth and savage body-guard; at his only English companion, John Hobhouse, who had travelled with him through Albania

and to-morrow was to start back to London, asleep now with a saddle for a pillow. While he gazed, day broke effulgent, like light at the first hour, and the sun rose, pouring its crimson wine into the goblet of the sea's blue crystal.

For a full year Gordon had roughed it in the wilderness, sleeping one night in a pasha's palace, the next in a cow-shed—a strange choice, it seemed, for a peer of twenty-two, who had taken his seat in the House of Lords and published a book that had become the talk of London. Yet now, as he rose to his feet and threw back his square-set shoulders, his colorless face and deep gray-blue eyes whetted with keen zest.

"This is better than England," he muttered. "How the deuce could anybody make such a world as that, I wonder? For what purpose were there ordained dandies and kings—and fellows of colleges—and women of a certain age—and peers—and myself, most of all?" His thought held an instant's thin edge of bitterness as his look fell: his right boot had a thicker sole than the left, and he wore an inner shoe that laced tightly under the shrunken foot.

Stepping gingerly lest he waken his comrade he threaded the prostrate forms to the shambling rock-path that led, through white rushes and clumps of cochineal cactus, to the town. A little way along, it crossed a ledge jutting from the heel of the hill. Under this shelf the water had washed a deep pool of limpid emerald. He threw off his clothing and plunged into the tingling surf. He swam far out into the sea, under the sky's lightening amethyst, every vein beating with delight.

Before he came from the water, the sunrise had gilded the tops of the mountains; while he dressed on the rock it was kindling golden half-moons on the minarets of Missolonghi, a mile away.

As his eyes wandered over the scene—the strange stern crags, the nearer fields broidered with currant-bushes, the girdling coast steeped in the wild poignant beauty of an Ionian October—they turned with a darker meaning to the town, quiet enough now, though at sunset it had blazed with Mussulman festivity, while its Greek citizens huddled in shops and houses behind barred doors. It was the feast of Ramazan—a time for the Turks of daily abstinence and nightly carousal, a long fast for lovers, whose infractions were punished rigorously with *bastinado* and with the fatal sack. Till the midnight tolled from the mosques the shouts and muskets of the faithful had blasted the solitude. And this land was the genius-mother of the world, in the grip of her Turkish conqueror, who defiled her cities with his Moslem feasts and her waters with the bodies of his drowned victims!

Would it always be so? Gordon thought of a roll of manuscript in his saddle-bag—verses written on the slopes of those mountains and in the fiery shade of these shores. Into the pages he had woven all that old love for this shackled nation which had been one of the pure enthusiasms of his youth and had grown and deepened with his present sojourn. Would the old spirit of Marathon ever rearise?

He went back to the sandy beach, sat down, and drawing paper from his pocket, began to write, using

his knee for a desk. The spell of the place and hour was upon him. Lines flowed from his pencil:

"The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece!
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of war and peace,—
Where Delos rose, and Phœbus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set.

The mountains look on Marathon—
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dreamed that Greece might still be free;
For, standing on the Persians' grave,
I could not deem myself a slave."

His gaze fell on the figures about the dead fire, wrapped in rough *capotes*—rugged descendants of a once free race, hardier than their great forefathers, but with ancient courage overlaid, cringing now from the wands of Turkish pashas. A somber look came to his face as he wrote:

"'Tis something, in the death of fame,
Though linked among a fettered race,
To feel at least a patriot's shame,
Even as I sing, suffuse my face;
For what is left the poet here?
For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

Must *we* but weep o'er days more blessed?
Must *we* but blush? Our fathers bled.
Earth! Render back from out thy breast
A remnant of the Spartan dead!
Of the three hundred grant but three
To make a new Thermopylæ!"

He looked up. The crescents on the spires of the town were dazzling points of light in the gold-blue air, the morning full-blown, clean and fragrant with scents of sun and sea. In the midst of its warmth and beauty he shivered. An odd prescient sensation had come to him like a gelid breath from the upper ether. He started at a voice behind him:

"More poetry, I'll lay a guinea!"

Gordon did not smile. The chill was still creeping in his veins. He thrust the paper into his pocket as Hobhouse threw himself down by his side.

The latter noticed his expression. "What is it?" he asked.

"Only one of my moods, I fancy. But just before you spoke I had a curious feeling; it was as though this spot—that town yonder—were tangled in my destiny."

The barbaric servants had roused now and a fire was crackling.

"There's a simple remedy for that," the other said. "Come back to London with me. I swear I hate to start to-morrow without you."

Gordon shook his head. He replied more lightly, for the eerie depression had vanished as swiftly as it had come:

"Not I! You'll find it the same hedge-and-ditch old harridan of a city—wine, women, wax-works and weather-cocks—the coaches in Hyde Park, and man milliners promenading of a Sunday. I prefer a clear sky with windy mare's-tails, and a fine savage race of two-legged leopards like this,"—he pointed to the fire with its picturesque figures. "I'll have another year of it, Hobhouse, before I go back."

"You'll have spawned your whole quarto by then, no doubt!"

"Perhaps. I am like the tiger; if I miss the first spring I go growling back to my jungle. I must take the fit as it offers. Composition comes over me in a kind of frenzy, and if I don't write to empty my mind, I go mad. Poetry is the lava of the imagination, whose eruption prevents an earthquake. Much the little envious knot of parson-poets who rule the reviews know about it!" he continued half satirically.

Hobhouse smiled quizzically. The man beside him had had a short and sharp acquaintance with England's self-constituted authorities in poetic criticism. Two years before, fresh from college, he had published a slender volume of verses. In quality these had been indifferent enough, but the fact that their author was a peer offered an attractive text for the gibes of the reviewers. Their ridicule pierced him. His answer had been immediate and stunning—a poetical Satire, keen as a rapier, polished as a mirror, pitiless as the Inquisition, which flayed his detractors one by one for the laughter of London. The book had been the talk of the year, but while at the very acme of popularity, the youthful author had withdrawn it, and, still smarting from the sneers which had been its inspiration, had sailed for the Levant. A thought of this sensitiveness was in Hobhouse's mind as Gordon continued:

"When I get home I'll decide whether to put it into the fire or to publish. If it doesn't make fuel for me it will for the critics."

"You gave them cause enough. You'll admit that."

"They should have let me alone." Gordon's voice

under its lightness hid a note of unaffected feeling, and his eyes gathered spots of fire and brown. "It wasn't much—that first poor little college book of mine! But no! I was a noble upstart—a young fool of a peer that needed taking down! So they loosed their literary mountebanks to snap at me! Is it any wonder I hit back? Who wouldn't?"

"At least," averred Hobhouse, "very few would have done it so well. There was no quill-whittler left in the British Isles when you finished that Satire of yours. None of the precious penny-a-liners will ever forgive you."

The other laughed. "I was mad, I tell you—mad!" he said with humorous ferocity. "I wrote in a passion and a sirocco, with three bottles of claret in my head and tears in my eyes. Besides, I was two years younger then. Before I sailed I suppressed it. I bought up the plates and every loose volume in London. Ah well," he added, "one's youthful indiscretions will pass. When I come back, I'll give the rascals something better."

He paused, his eyes on the stony bridle-path that led from the town. "What do you make of that?" he queried.

Hobhouse looked. Along the rugged way was approaching a strange procession. In advance walked an officer in a purple coat, carrying the long wand of his rank. Following came a file of Turkish soldiers. Then a group of servants, wearing the uniform of the Waywode—the town's chief magistrate—and leading an ass, across whose withers was strapped a bulky brown sack. After flocked a rabble of all degrees, Turks and Greeks.

"Queer!" speculated Hobhouse. "It's neither a fu-

neral nor a wedding. What other of their hanged ceremonials can it be?"

The procession halted on the rock-shelf over the deep pool. The soldiers began to unstrap the ass's brown burden. A quick flash of horrified incredulity had darted into Gordon's eyes. The ass balked, and one of the men pounded it with his sword-scabbard. While it flinched and scrambled, a miserable muffled wail came from somewhere—seemingly from the air.

Gordon stiffened. His hand flew to the pistol in his belt. He leaped to his feet and dashed up the scraggy path toward the rock, shouting in a voice of strained, infuriate energy:

"By God, Hobhouse, there's a woman in that sack!"

CHAPTER II

"MAD, BAD AND DANGEROUS TO KNOW."

At Lady Jersey's town house, in Portman Square, the final course had been served and the gentlemen's glasses were being replenished. Lady Jersey gave the signal. The gentlemen rose and bowed, the three ladies withdrew to the drawing-room; then the host, the earl, said, cracking a walnut:

"I heard the other day that George Gordon is on his way back to London. You were with him in the East some time, weren't you, Hobhouse?"

There were but three besides the host: Sheridan, the playwright, looking the beau and wit combined, of a clarety, elderly, red complexion, brisk and bulbous—William Lamb, heir of the Melbourne title, a personified "career" whose voice was worn on the edges by public speaking—and Hobhouse, whom the earl addressed.

The young man bowed. "I left him in Greece just a year ago."

"Is it true," asked Lamb, sipping his Moët with finical deliberation, "that he drinks nothing but barley-water and dines on two soda biscuits?"

"He eats very little," assented Hobhouse; "dry toast,

water-cress, a glass of claret—that was usually his regimen."

"What an infernal pose!" Lamb exclaimed, rousing. "A ghoul eating rice with a needle! He does it to be eccentric. Why, at Cambridge they say he used to keep a tame bear! His appetite is all apiece with his other fopperies abroad that the papers reprint here. One week he's mopish. Another, he's for being jocular with everybody. Then again he's a sort of limping Don Quixote, rowing with the police for a woman of the town—like that Greek demirep of his he rescued from the sack, that Petersham tells about."

"Nobody believes Petersham's yarns!" growled Sheridan.

"I was on the ground when that incident occurred. I'm sorry the clubs got hold of it. It's a confounded shame."

Hobhouse spoke explosively. Lord Jersey's shrewd deep-set eyes gathered interest, and Sheridan paused with a pinch of snuff in transit.

"It happened one sunrise, when we were camped on the sea-beach just outside Missolonghi. That is a Greek town held by the Turks, who keep its Christian citizens in terror of their lives. The girl in the case was a Greek by birth, but her father was a renegado, so she came under Moslem law."

"I presume she was handsome," drawled Lamb caustically. "I credit Gordon with good taste in femininity, at least."

Hobhouse flushed, but kept his temper.

"It's nonsense," he went on,—"the story that it was any affair of his own. There was a young Arab-looking

ensign who had fallen in with us, named Trevanion—he had deserted from an English sloop-of-the-line at Bombay. He had disappeared the night before, and we had concluded then it was for some petticoat deviltry he'd been into. I didn't like the fellow from the start, but Gordon wouldn't give an unlucky footpad the cold shoulder."

Sheridan chuckled. "That's Gordon! I remember he had an old hag of a fire-lighter at his rooms here—Mrs. Muhl. I asked him once why he ever brought her from Newstead. 'Well,' says he, 'no one else will have the poor old devil.' "

"Come, come," put in Lamb, waspishly. "Let's hear the new version; we've had Petersham's."

"We had seen Trevanion talking to the girl," Hobhouse continued, "in her father's shop in the bazaar. We didn't know, of course, when we saw the procession, whom the Turkish scoundrels were going to drown. I didn't even guess what it was all about till Gordon shouted to me. His pistol was out before you could wink, and in another minute he had the fat leader by the throat."

"With Mr. Hobhouse close behind him," suggested the earl.

"I hadn't a firearm, so I was of small assistance. We had some Suliote ragamuffins for body-guard, but they are so cowed they will run from a Turkish uniform. They promptly disappeared—till it was all over. Well, there was a terrible hullabaloo for a while. I made sure they would butcher us out and out, but Gordon kept his pistol clapped on the purple coat and faced the whole lot down."

"Wish he *had* shot him," rumbled Sheridan, "and appealed to the resident! In the year of Grace 1810 it's time England took a hand and blew the Turk out of Greece, anyway!"

"I presume there was no doubt about the offense?" asked the earl.

"It seemed not. Trevanion was a good-looking, swarthy rogue, and had been too bold. Though he got away himself, he left the girl to her fate. It was the feast of Ramazan, and he must have known what that fate would be. The time made interference harder for Gordon, since both law and religion were against him. He had learned some of their palaver. He told them he was a pasha-of-three-tails himself in his own country, and at last made the head butcher cut open the sack. The girl was a pitiful thing to see, with great almond eyes sunk with fright—fifteen years old, perhaps, though she looked no more than twelve—and her chalk-white cheeks and the nasty way they had her hands and feet tied made my blood boil. There was more talk, and Gordon flourished the firman Ali Pasha had given him when we were in Albania. The officer couldn't read, but he pretended he could and at last agreed to go back and submit the matter to the Waywode. So back we all paraded to Missolonghi. It cost Gordon a plenty there, but he won his point."

"That's where Petersham's account ends, isn't it?" The earl's tone was dry.

"It's not all of it," Hobhouse answered with some heat. "Gordon was afraid the rascally primate might repent of his promise (the Mussulman religion is strenuous) so he took the girl that day to a convent and as soon

as possible sent her to Argos to her brother. She died, poor creature, two months afterward, of fever."

Lamb sniffed audibly.

"Very pretty! He ought to turn it into a poem. I dare say he will. If you hadn't been there to applaud, Hobhouse, I wager the original program wouldn't have been altered. Pshaw! He always was a sentimental harlequin," he went on contemptuously, "strutting about in a neck-cloth and delicate health, and starving himself into a consumption so the women will say, 'Poor Gordon—how interesting he looks!' Everything he does is a hectic of vanity, and all he has written is glittering nonsense—snow and sophistry."

Sheridan's magnificent iron-gray head, roughly hacked as if from granite, turned sharply. "He's no sheer seraph nor saint," he retorted; "none of us is, but curse catch me! there's no sense in remonstering him! He'll do great things one of these days. He was born with a rosebud in his mouth and a nightingale singing in his ear!"

The other shrugged his shoulders, but at that moment the protestant face of the hostess appeared.

"How interesting men are to each other!" Lady Jersey exclaimed. "We women have actually been driven to the evening papers."

The four men followed into the drawing-room, furnished in ruby and dull gold—a room perfect in its appointments, for its mistress added to her innate kindness of heart and tact a rare taste and selection. It showed in the Sèvres-topped tables, the tawny fire-screens, the candelabra of jasper and filigree gold, and in the splendid Gainsborough opposite the door.

The whole effect was a perfect setting for Lady Jersey. In it Lady Caroline Lamb appeared too exotic, too highly colored, too flamboyant—like a purple orchid in a dish of tea-roses; on the other hand, it was too warmly drawn for the absent stateliness of Annabel Milbanke, Lady Melbourne's niece and guest for the season. The latter's very posture, coldly fair like a sword on salute, seemed to chide the sparkle and glitter and color that radiated, a latent impetuosity, from Lady Caroline.

"I see by the *Courier*," observed Lady Jersey, "that George Gordon is in London."

"Speak of the devil—" sneered Lamb; and Sheridan said:

"That's curious; we were just discussing him."

Miss Milbanke's even voice entered the conversation. "One hears everywhere of his famous Satire. You think well of it, don't you, Mr. Sheridan?"

"My dear madam, for the honor of having written it, I would have welcomed all the enemies it has made its author."

"What dreadful things the papers are always saying about him!" cried Lady Jersey, with a little shudder. "I hope his mother hasn't seen them. I hear she lives almost a recluse at Newstead Abbey."

"With due respect to the conventions," Lamb interposed ironically, "there's small love lost between them. His guardian used to say they quarrelled like cat and dog."

"He never liked the boy," disputed the hostess, warmly. "Why, he wouldn't stand with him when he took his seat in the Lords. I am right, am I not, Mr. Hobhouse?"

"Yes, your ladyship. Lord Carlisle refused to introduce him. The Chancellor, even, haggled absurdly over his certificate of birth. Gordon came to Parliament with only one friend—an old tutor of his—entered alone, took the peer's oath and left. He has never crossed the threshold since."

"What a shame," cried Lady Caroline, "that neither Annabel nor I have ever seen your paragon, Lady Jersey! Mr. Hobhouse, you or Mr. Sheridan must bring him to dinner to Melbourne House."

"If he'll come!" said Lamb, *sotto voce,* to the earl. "They say he hates to see women eat, because it destroys his illusions."

Lady Jersey shrugged. "It is vastly in his favor that he still has any," she retorted, rising. "Come, Caro, give us some music. We are growing too serious."

Lady Caroline went to the piano, and let her hands wander over the keys. Wild, impatient of restraint, she was a perpetual kaleidoscope of changes. Now an unaccountably serious mood had captured her. The melody that fell from her fingers was a minor strain, and she began singing in a voice low, soft and caressing —with a feeling that Annabel Milbanke had never guessed lay within that agreeable, absurd, perplexing, mad-cap little being:

"Maid of Athens, ere we part,
Give, oh, give me back my heart!
Or since that has left my breast,
Keep it now and take the rest!
Hear my vow before I go,
Zoë mou, sas agapo!

By thy tresses unconfined,
Wooed by each Ægean wind!
By those lids whose jetty fringe,
Kiss thy soft cheeks' blooming tinge!
By those wild eyes like the roe,
Zoë mou, sas agapo!

By those lips I may not taste!
By that zone-encircled waist!
By all token-flow'rs that tell
(Word can never speak so well!)
By love's changing joy and woe,
Zoë mou, sas agapo!"

She sang the lines with a strange tenderness—a haunting accent of refrain, that had insensibly moved every one in the room, and surprised for the moment even her own matter-of-fact husband. A womanly softness had misted Lady Jersey's gaze, and Annabel Milbanke looked quickly and curiously up at the singer as she paused, a spot of color in her cheeks and her hazel eyes large and bright.

There was a moment of silence—a blank which Hobhouse broke:

"He wrote that when we were travelling together in Albania. I'm glad I sent it to you, Lady Caroline. I didn't know how beautiful it was."

Miss Milbanke turned her head.

"So that is George Gordon's," she said. She had felt a slight thrill, an emotion new to her, while the other sang. "Mr. Hobhouse, what does he look like?"

The young man, who was by nature and liking something of an artist, took a folded paper from his wallet and spread it out beneath a lamp.

"I made this sketch the last night I saw him in Greece," he said, "at Missolonghi, just a year ago."

Lady Caroline Lamb and Miss Milbanke both bent to look at the portrait. When they withdrew their eyes, the calmer, colder features showed nothing, but Lady Caroline's wore a deep, vivid flush.

"Mad, bad and dangerous to know!" her brain was saying, "yet—what a face!"

CHAPTER III

THE BOOMERANG

"George Gordon!"

There was an unaffected pleasure in the exclamation, and its echo in the answer: "Sherry! And young as ever, I'll be bound!"

"I heard last night at Lady Jersey's you were in London," said Sheridan, after the first greetings. "So you've had enough of Greece, eh? Three years! What have you done in all that time?"

"I have dined the mufti of Thebes, I have viewed the harem of Ali Pasha, I have kicked an Athenian postmaster. I was blown ashore on the island of Salamis. I caught a fever going to Olympia. And I have found that I like to be back in England—the oddest thing of all!"

Gordon ended half-earnestly. Threading the familiar thoroughfares, tasting the city's rush, its interminableness, its counterplay and torsion of living, he had felt a sense of new appreciation. His months of freer breathing in the open spaces of the East had quickened his pulses.

The pair strolled on together chatting, the old wit linking his arm in the younger man's. He had always liked Gordon and the appearance of his famous *tour de force* had lifted this liking into genuine admiration.

"Hobhouse says you've brought back another book," said he, presently.

"I've a portmanteau crammed with stanzas in Spenser's measure, but they're likely to be drivelling idiotism. I must leave that to the critics. I have heard their chorus of deep damnations once," Gordon added ruefully. "But no doubt they've long ago forgotten my infantile ferocities."

Sheridan shot a keen glance under his bushy brows. Could the other, he wondered, have so undervalued the vicious hatred his cutting Satire had raised in the ranks of the prigs and pamphleteers it pilloried? In his long foreign absence had he been ignorant of the flood of tales so assiduously circulated in the London newspapers and magazines?

His thought snapped. Gordon had halted before a book-shop which bore the sign of "The Juvenile Library," his eye caught by printed words on a pasteboard placard hung in its window.

"Sherry!" he cried, his color changing prismatically. "Look there!"

The sign read:

"Queen Mab."
For writing the which Mr. Percy Bysshe Shelley Stands lately expelled from University College, Oxford.
2s, 6d.

Also

"English Bards and Scotch Reviewers"
A Poetical Satire
By a Noble Lord Travelling Abroad.
A few copies of this work
(Suppressed by the Author at great expense)
which can be bought nowhere else in London—1 guinea.

"Devil take the blackguard!" blurted Sheridan. He followed the other into the musty shop where a stooped, agate-eyed old man laid aside a black-letter volume of Livy's Roman History and shuffled forward to greet them.

Gordon's face was pallid and his eyes were sparkling. He had written the book the pasteboard advertised in a fit of rage that had soon cooled to shame of its retaliative scorn. He had believed every copy procurable destroyed before he left England. He had thought of this fact often with self-congratulation, dreaming this monument of his youthful petulance rooted out. To-day it was almost the first thing he confronted. The sedulous greed that hawked his literary indiscretion to the world roused now an old murderous fury that had sometimes half-scared him in his childhood. He was battling with this as he pointed out the second item of the sign.

"How many of these have you?" he asked the proprietor shortly.

"Twelve."

"I will take them all." Gordon put a bank-note on the counter.

The bookseller regarded him sagely as he set the books before him. It was a good day's bargain.

A doorway led from the shop into a binding-room, where stood a stove with glue-pots heating upon it. With a word to Sheridan, Gordon seized his purchase and led the way into this room. The dealer stared and followed.

He saw the purchaser tear the books cover from cover, and thrust them one by one into the fiery maw of the stove. And now, at the stranger's halting step and the beauty of his face, sudden intelligence came to him. Five—ten—twenty guineas apiece he could have got, if he had only found the wit to guess! The knowledge turned his parchment visage saffron with suppressed cupidity, anger and regret.

The bell in the outer room announced a customer, and the bookseller went into the shop, leaving the door ajar. Through it came a voice—a lady's inquiry. She was asking for a copy of the Satire whose pages were shrivelling under Sheridan's regretful eye.

Gordon's hand held the last volume. He had turned to look through the door—a fine, tall, spirit-looking girl, he thought. His observant eye noted her face—a cool, chaste classic, and her dress, rich, but with a kind of quiet and severity.

Yielding to some whimsical impulse, he went rapidly out to the pavement. She was seating herself in her carriage beside her companion as he approached.

"I had just secured the last copy," he stated gravely, almost apologetically. "I have another, however, and shall be glad if you will take this."

A glimmer of surprise had shadowed the immobile face, but it passed.

"You are very kind," she said. "It seems difficult to procure. We saw the sign quite by accident!" She was demurring—on prudential grounds. She hesitated only a moment—just long enough for him to become aware of another personality beside her, an impression of something wild, Ariel-like, eccentric yet pleasing—then she searched her purse and held out to him a golden guinea.

"That is the price, I think," she added, and with the word "Melbourne House" to the coachman, the carriage merged in the stream of the highway.

Annabel Milbanke's complaisant brow was undisturbed. She was very self-possessed, very unromantic, very correct. As the chestnut bays whirled on toward Hyde Park Corner, she did no more than allow her colorless imagination to ask itself: "Who is he, I wonder?"

Her fragile, overdressed companion might have answered that mental question. As Gordon had come from the doorway, his step halting, yet so slightly as to be unnoticed by one who saw the delicate symmetry of his face, a quick tinge had come to Lady Caroline Lamb's cheeks. The brown curls piled on the pale oval of brow, the deep gray eyes, the full chiselled lips and strongly modelled chin—all brought back to her a pencil sketch she had once seen under a table-lamp. The tinge grew swiftly to a flush, and she turned to look back as they sped on, but she said nothing.

Gordon had seen neither the flush nor the backward look. His eyes, as he surveyed the golden guinea in his

hand, held only the picture of the calm girl who had given it to him.

"Melbourne House," he repeated aloud. "What a stately beauty she has—the perfection of a glacier! I wonder now why I did that," he thought quizzically. "I never saw her before. A woman who wants to read my Satire; and I always hated an *esprit* in petticoats! It was impulse—pure impulse, reasonless and irresponsible. God knows what contradictions one contains!"

He tossed the coin in the air abstractedly, caught it and slipped it into his waistcoat pocket as Sheridan rejoined him. The latter had not seen the carriage and its occupants.

"A fine ash-heap we've made," said the wit, "and a pity too! Curse catch me, I wish *I'd* written it! If it were mine, instead of suppressing, I'd print a new edition and be damned to them. If they won't forget this, cram another down their throats and let them choke on it! Come and drink a bottle of *vin de Graves* with me at the Cocoa-Tree," he continued persuasively. "Tom Moore is in town. We'll get him and go to the Italian Opera afterward. What do you say?"

Gordon shook his head. "Not to-day. I have an appointment at my rooms. Hobhouse pretends he wants to read my new manuscript."

"To-morrow, then. I want to get the rights of the latest apocryphal stories of you the clubs are relishing."

"Stories? What stories?"

Sheridan cleared his throat uneasily. "Surely, letters—newspapers—must have reached you in Greece?"

"Newspapers!" exclaimed Gordon. "I haven't read

one in a year. As for letters—well, it has been little better. So the newspapers have been talking of me, eh?"

"Not that any one in particular believes them," interposed his companion hastily, "or anything the *Scourge* prints, for that matter!"

"The *Scourge?* That was the worst of the lot before I left. It's still mud-flinging, is it? I suppose I might have expected it. There's scarcely a witling-scribbler in London I didn't grill with that cursed Satire of mine, that they won't let stay in its grave. But the newspaper wiseacres—what under the canopy can *they* know of my wanderings? I haven't set eyes on a journalist since I left."

"Of course, they're perfectly irresponsible!"

"What are they saying, Sherry?"

Sheridan hesitated.

"Come, come; out with it!"

"The *Morning Post* reported last week that the pasha of the Morea had made you a present of a Circassian girl—"

"It was a Circassian *mare!*"

"And that you had quarters in a Franciscan nunnery."

"A monastery!" Gordon laughed—an unmirthful laugh. "With one Capuchin friar, a bandy-legged Turkish cook, a couple of Albanian savages and a dragoman! What tales are they telling at the clubs?"

"That's about all that's new—except Petersham. He has some tale of a Turkish peri of yours that you saved from a sack in the Ægean."

Gordon's lips set tight together. The pleasure he

had felt at his return had been shot through with a new pain that spoke plainly in his question:

"Sherry! Is there no story they tell of these two years that I need not blush at?"

The other caught at the straw. "They say you swam the Hellespont, and outdid Leander."

"I'm obliged to them! I wonder they didn't invent a Hero to wait for my Leandering!" The voice held a bitter humor, the antithesis of the open pleasantry of their meeting. "I presume that version will not be long in arriving," Gordon added, and held out his hand.

Sheridan grasped it warmly. "I shall see you to-morrow," he said, and they parted.

From the edge of his show-window, William Godwin, the bookseller, with a malignant look in his agate eyes, watched Gordon go.

In the inner room he raked the fragments of charred leather from the stove, thinking of the guineas he had let slip through his fingers. Then he sat down at his desk and drawing some dusty sheets of folio to him began to write, with many emendations. His quill pen scratched maliciously for a long time. At last he leaned back and regarded what he had written with huge satisfaction.

"The atheistical brat of a lord!" he muttered vindictively. "I'll make his ribs gridirons for his heart! I'll send this as a leader for the next issue of the *Scourge!*"

CHAPTER IV

THE LITTLE BOY IN ABERDEEN

"It is magnificent!" Hobhouse looked up as he spoke.

It was in Gordon's apartment in Reddish's Hotel. The table was strewn with loose manuscript—the verses he had laughingly told Sheridan were "likely to be drivelling idiotism." Over these Hobhouse had bent for an hour, absorbed and delighted, breathing their strange spirit of exhilaration, of freedom from rhythmic shackles, of adventure into untried poetic depths. They stood out in sharp relief—original, unique, of classic model yet of a *genre* all their own. It would be a facer for Jeffrey, the caustic editor of the *Edinburgh Review,* and for all the crab-apple following Gordon's boyish rancor had roused to abuse. Now he said:

"Nothing like it was ever written before. Have you shown it to a publisher yet?"

Gordon glanced at the third person in the room—a gray-haired elderly man with kindly eyes—as he replied:

"Dallas, here, took it to Miller. He declined it."

"The devil!" shot out Hobhouse, incredulously.

"John Murray will publish it," Gordon continued.

"I had his letter with the copyhold an hour ago." He took a paper from his pocket and held it up to view.

"I congratulate you both," Hobhouse said heartily.

Gordon shrugged acridly, and rising, began to pace the room. The sore spot had been rankling since that walk with Sheridan.

"Wait till the critics see it. They will have other opinions, no doubt. Well, never mind," he added. "I was peppered so highly once that it must be aloes or cayenne to make me taste. They forced me to bitterness at first; I may as well go through to the last. *Væ victis!* I'll fall fighting the host. That's something."

The gray-haired man had picked up his hat. It was not a hat of the primest curve, nor were his clothes of a fashionable cut. They were well-worn, but his neckcloth was spotless, and though his face showed lines of toil and anxiety, it bore the inextinguishable marks of gentility. Gordon had not told him that he had spent a part of the day inquiring into the last detail of invalid wife and literary failure; now his glance veiled a singular look whose source lay very deep in the man.

"Don't hasten," he said. "I have a reputation for gloom, but my friends must not be among the reputants! Least of all you, Dallas."

The other sat down again and threw his hat on the table, smiling. "Gloom?" he asked. "And have you still that name? You were so as a little laddie in Aberdeen, but I thought you would have left off the Scotch blues long ago with your tartan."

"I wish I could," cried Gordon, "as I left off the burr from my tongue. How I hated the place—all except Dee-side and old Lachin-y-gair! That pleased me

for its wildness. If God had a hand in its valleys, the devil must have had a hoof in some of its ravines, for the clouds foamed up from their crevices like the spray of the ocean of hell. Dallas," he said, veering, "what a violent, unlovely little wretch it was we used to know so many years ago,—you never saw him, Hobhouse!—that little boy in Aberdeen!"

Hobhouse looked up. There was a curious note in the voice, a sort of brooding inquiry, of regret, of wistfulness all in one. It was a tone he had never heard so plainly but once before—a night when they two had sat together before a camp-fire on the Greek sea-coast, when Gordon had talked of old Cambridge days, and of Matthews, his classmate, destined to be drowned. It was this tone Hobhouse heard.

The older man's eyes had a retrospective haze, which he winked away, as he smoothed down the frayed edges of his waistcoat with a hesitating hand, as though half-embarrassed under the other's gaze.

"A little misshapen unit of a million," continued Gordon, "a miserable nothing of something, who dreamed barbarous fantasies and found no one who understood him—no one but one. Do you remember him, Dallas?"

The other nodded, his head turned away. "He was not so hard to understand."

"Not for you, Dallas, and it's for that reason most of all I am going to paint his picture. Will it bore you, Hobhouse?" he asked whimsically. "To discuss childhood is such a snivelling, popping small-shot, waterhen waste of powder to most people."

Hobhouse shook his head, and the speaker went on:

"First of all, I wish you would witness a signature for me,"—and handed him the paper he had taken from his pocket.

As the young man glanced at it, he looked up with quick surprise, but checked himself and, signing it, leaned back in his chair.

Gordon returned to his slow pace up and down the room, and as he went he talked:

"The fiercest animals have the smallest litters, and he was an only child, though he had been told he had a half-sister somewhere in the world. He was unmanageable in temper, sullenly passionate, a queer little bundle of silent rages and wants and hates—the sort people call 'inhuman.' There was never but one nurse, if I remember, who could manage him at all. He had a twisted foot—the gift of his mother, and added to by a Nottingham quack. He lived in lodgings,—cursed fusty they were, too, the fustiest in Aberdeen,—with his mother. He had never set eyes on his father; how he knew he had one, I can't imagine. When he was old enough, he was sent to 'squeel', as they called it in Aberdeen dialect—day-school, where he learned to say:

'God—made—man.
Let—us—love—Him,'

and to make as poor a scrawl as ever scratched over a frank. He was a blockhead, a hopeless blockhead! The master,—how devout and razor-faced and dapper he was! he was minister to the kirk also,—used to topsy-turvy the class now and then, and bring the lowest highest. These were the only times the boy was at the

head. Then the master would say, 'Now, George, man, let's see how soon you can limp to the foot again!' This was a jest, but when the others shouted, the boy used to turn cold with shame. Small wonder he didn't learn, for he didn't want to. A pity, too, Dallas, for in those days three words and a half-smile would have changed him. I venture it would take more than that to-day!"

He paused, his brows frowning, his lips drawn softly. When he went on, it was in a more constrained tone:

"One year, suddenly, everything changed. His guardian took him from the school and he had a tutor—a very serious, saturnine young man, with spectacles,"—Dallas had taken off his own and was polishing them earnestly with his handkerchief,—"who didn't make the boy hate him—a curious thing! He was a great man already in the boy's eyes, because he had been in America when the Colonies were fighting King George. The boy would have liked to be a colonist too—he had never been introduced to the gaudy charlatanry of kings and the powwowishness of rank. He hadn't become a lord then, himself.

"This marvel of a tutor wasn't pestilently prolix. He taught him no skimble-skamble out of the catechism, though he was a good churchman; but the first time the boy looked in those big horn spectacles, he knew there was one man in the world who could understand him. The tutor made him want to learn, too, and strangest of all, he never seemed to notice that his pupil was lame. How did he perform that miracle, Dallas?"

The older man set his glasses carefully on the ridge of his nose, as he shook his head with a little graceful,

deprecating gesture that was very winning. Hobhouse's eyes were tracing the design of the carpet.

"I remember once," Gordon continued, "a strange thing happened. The boy's father came to Aberdeen. One day—the boy was walking up the High Street with his tutor—some one pointed him out. To think that splendid-looking man in uniform was his father! He felt very pitiful-hearted, but he plucked up courage and went up to him and told him his name."

Dallas, who had shifted uneasily in his chair, cleared his throat with some energy, rose and stood looking out of the window.

"The splendid gentleman forgot to take the boy in his arms. He looked him over and lisped: 'A pretty boy—but what a pity he has such a leg!' A queer thing to say, wasn't it, Hobhouse!

"One of those fits of rage that made all right-minded people hate him came over the boy when he heard that. 'Dinna speak of it! Dinna speak of it!' he screamed, and struck at the man with his fist. Then he ran away —off to the fields, I think—as fast as he could, and that was the first and the last time he ever saw his father.

"He had forgotten all about his tutor, but the tutor ran after him, and found him, and took him for a wonderful afternoon—miles away, clear to the seaside, where they lay on the purple heather and he read to him out of the history—what was it he read to the boy, Dallas?"

The man by the window jumped. "Bless my soul," he said, wiping his eyes vigorously; "I do believe it was the battle of Lake Regillus!"

"Yes, it was, Dallas! And they went in swimming and had supper at a farmhouse—"

"So they did! So I believe they did!"

"And they didn't get home till the moon was up. Ah —Dallas!"

Gordon went over and laid his hand on the other's arm. "Do you think I shall ever forget?" he said.

"I imagine that was the end of the tutorship," observed Hobhouse.

"Yes, the idiots!" Gordon laughed a little, as did the elder man, though there was a suspicious moisture in the latter's eyes. "They said he was spoiling me. You came to London, Dallas, and wrote books—moral essays and theology—too good to give you money or fame. Yes, yes,"—as Dallas made a gesture of dissent, —"much too good for this thaw-swamped age of rickety tragedy and canting satire! But when you left Aberdeen, you left something behind. It was a pony—four sound straight legs, Dallas, to help out a crooked one—a fat, frowsy, hard-going little beast, I've no doubt, but it seemed the greatest thing in all Scotland to me."

"Pshaw!" protested Dallas. "It laid me only four pounds, I'll swear."

"Well," pursued Gordon, "the boy finally dropped back into the old stubborn rut. He went to Harrow and came out a solitary, and to Cambridge and they called him an atheist. Life hasn't been all mirth and innocence, milk and water. I've seen nearly as many lives as Plutarch's, but I'm not bilious enough to forget, Dallas. You were the first of all to write and congratulate me when the critics only sneered. When I came to London to claim my seat in the Lords (a

scurvy honor, but one has to do as other people do, confound them!) without a single associate in that body to introduce me—I think a peer never came to his place so unfriended—you rode with me to the door, Dallas, you and I alone, and so we rode back again."

He paused, took up the paper Hobhouse had signed and handed it to the man who still stood by the window.

"Dallas," he said, "you gave me my first ride in the saddle. I've been astride another bigger nag lately—one they call Pegasus; this is its first real gallop, and I want you to ride with me."

With a puzzled face Dallas looked from the speaker to the paper. It was Gordon's copyhold of the verses that lay there in manuscript, legally transferred to himself.

As he took in its significance, a deep flush stole into his scholarly-pale cheeks, and tears, unconcealed this time, clouded his sight. He put out one uncertain hand, while Hobhouse made a noisy pretense of gathering together the loose leaves under his hands.

"It's for six hundred pounds!" he said huskily; "six hundred pounds!"

CHAPTER V

AN ANYTHINGARIAN

Two hours later Gordon sat alone in the room, looking out on the softening sun-glare of St. James Street. In the chastened light the brilliant dark-auburn curls that clustered over his colorless face showed a richer brown and under their long black lashes his eyes had deepened their tint. Near-by, where Park Place opened, a fountain played, on whose bronze rim dusty sparrows preened and twittered. The clubs that faced the street were showing signs of life, and on the pave a newsboy, for the benefit of late-rising west-end dandies, was crying the papers.

Gordon was waiting for Hobhouse. They were to sup together this last night. To-morrow he was to leave for Newstead Abbey and the uncomfortable ministrations of his eccentric and capricious mother, whom he had not yet seen. He had come back to his land and place to find that enmity had been busy envenoming his absence, and the taste of home had turned unsweet to his palate.

As he sat now, however, Gordon had thrust bitterness from his mood. He was thinking with satisfaction of the copyhold he had transferred. He had always de-

clared that for what he wrote he would take no money. If these verses—the first in which he felt he had expressed something of his real self—if these brought recompense, it was a fitting disposition he had made. He had paid an old debt to the man with the worn waistcoat and kindly, studious face—almost the only debt of its kind he owed in the world.

The words with which Dallas had left him recurred to him—"God bless you!"

"Poor old plodding Dallas!" he mused reflectively. "It's curious how a man's sense of gratitude drags up his religion—if he *has* any to drag up. He thinks now the Creator put into my heart to do that—doesn't give himself a bit of credit for it!"

He laughed reminiscently.

"I don't suppose he has seen six hundred pounds to spend since he bought that pony! He has had a hard row to hoe all his life, and never did an ounce of harm to any living thing, yet at the first turn of good luck, he fairly oozes thankfulness to the Almighty. He is a churchman clear through. He believes in revealed religion—though no religion ever *is* revealed—and yet he doesn't mistake theology for Christianity. He positively doesn't know the meaning of the word cant. Ah —there goes another type!"

Gordon was looking at a square, mottle-faced man passing slowly on the opposite side of the street, carrying a bundle of leaflets from which now and then he drew to give to a passer-by. He was high-browed, with eyes that projected like an insect's and were flattish in their orbits. He wore a ministerial cloak over his street costume.

"There's Cassidy," he said to himself. "Dr. James Cassidy, on shore leave, distributing his little doctrinal tracts. I remember him well. He is in the navy medical service, but it's the grief of his life he can't be a parson. He talked enough pedantry over the ship's table of the *Pylades,* while I was coming home from Greece, to last me till the resurrection. He is as ardent a predestinarian as any Calvinistic dean in gaiters, and knows all the hackneyed catch-phrases of eternal punishment. He has an itch for *propaganda,* and distributes his tracts, printed at his own expense, on the street-corner for the glory of theology. He is the sort of Christian who always writes damned with a dash. And yet, I wonder how much real true Christianity he has—Christianity like Dallas', I mean. I remember that scar on his cheek; it stands for a thrashing he got once at Bombay from a deserting ensign named Trevanion—a youth I met in Greece afterward, and had cause to remember, by the way!"

His eyes had darkened suddenly. His brows frowned, his firm white hand ran over his curls as though to brush away a disagreeable recollection.

"Cassidy would travel half around the globe to find the deserter that thrashed him and land him in quod. That man would deserve it richly enough, but would Cassidy's act be for the good of the king's service? No —for the satisfaction of James Cassidy. Is that Christianity? Dallas never treasured an enmity in his life. Yet both of them believe the same doctrine, worship the same God, read the same Bible. Does man make his beliefs? Or do his beliefs make him? If his beliefs make man, why are Dallas and Cassidy so differ-

ent? If man makes his beliefs, why should I not make my own? I will be an Anythingarian, and leave dreams to Emanuel Swedenborg!"

His gaze, that had followed the clerical figure till it passed out of sight, returned meditatively to the slaty white buildings opposite.

"Some people call me an atheist—I never could understand why, though I prefer Confucius to the Ten Commandments and Socrates to St. Paul,—the two latter happen to agree in their opinion of marriage,—and I don't think eating bread or drinking wine from the hand of an earthly vicar will make me an inheritor of Heaven. Dallas would tell me not to reason, but to believe. You might as well tell a man not to wake but to sleep. Neither Cicero nor the Messiah could ever have altered the vote of a single lord of the bed-chamber! And then to bully with torments and all that! The menace of hell makes as many devils as the penal code makes villains. All cant—Methodistical cant—yet Dallas believes it. And both he and Cassidy belong to the same one of the seventy-two sects that are tearing each other to pieces for the love of the Lord and hatred of each other—the sects that call men atheists because the eternal *why* will creep into what they write. If it pleases the Church—I except Dallas—to damn me for asking questions, I shall be only one with some millions of scoundrels who, after all, seem as likely to be damned as ever. As for immortality, if people are to live, why die? And our carcases, are they worth raising? I hope, if mine is, I shall have a better pair of legs than I have moved on these three-and-twenty

years, or I shall be sadly behind in the squeeze into Paradise!"

There was a knock at the door. He rose and opened it. It was Hobhouse. Gordon caught up his hat and they left the hotel together.

As they crossed Park Place a woman, draggled and gin-besotted, strayed from some Thames-side stews, sat on the worn stone base of the fountain, leaning uncertainly against its bronze rim. Her swollen lids hid her eyes and one hand, palm up, was thrown out across her lap. Gordon drew a shilling from his pocket, and passing his arm in Hobhouse's, laid it in the outstretched hand. At the touch of the coin, the drab started up, looked at him stupidly an instant, then with a ribald yell of laughter she flung the shilling into the water and shambled across the square, mimicking, in a hideous sort of buffoonery, the lameness of his gait.

Gordon's face turned ashen. He walked on without a word, but his companion could feel his hand tremble against his sleeve. When he spoke, it was in a voice half-smothered, forbidding.

"The old jeer!" he said. "The very riffraff of the street fling it at me! Yet I don't know why they should spare that taunt; even my mother did not. 'Lame brat!' she called me once when I was a child." He laughed, jarringly, harshly. "Why, only a few days before I sailed from England, in one of her fits of passion, she flung it at me. 'May you be as ill-formed in mind as you are in body!' Could they wish me worse than she?"

"Gordon!" expostulated the other. "Don't!—"

He had no time to finish. A grizzled man in the dress of an upper servant was approaching them, his

rubicund face bearing an unmistakable look of haste and concern.

"Well, Fletcher?" inquired Gordon.

"I thought your lordship had gone out earlier. I have been inquiring for you at the clubs. This message has just come from Newstead."

His master took the letter and read it. A strange, slow, remorseful look overspread the passion on his face.

"No ill news, I hope," ventured Hobhouse.

Gordon made no reply. He crushed the letter into his pocket, turned abruptly and strode up St. James Street.

"His lordship's mother died yesterday, Mr. Hobhouse," said the valet in a low voice.

"Good God!" exclaimed the other. "What a *contre-temps.*"

A knot of loungers were seated under the chandeliers in the bow-window of White's Club as Gordon passed on his way to the coach. Beau Brummell, *élégant,* spendthrift, in white great-coat and blue satin cravat exhaling an odor of *eau de jasmin,* lifted a languid glass to his eye.

"I'll go something handsome!" cried he; "I thought he was in Greece!"

"He's the young whelp of a peer who made such a dust with that Satire he wrote," Lord Petersham informed his neighbor. "Hero of the sack story I told you. Took the title from his great-uncle, the madman who killed old Chaworth in that tavern duel. House of Lords tried him for murder, you know. Used to train crickets and club them over the head with straws;

all of them left the house in a body the day he died. Devilish queer story! Who's the aged party with the portmanteaus? Valet?"

"Yes," asserted some one. "The old man was here a while ago trying to find Gordon—with bad news. His lordship's mother is dead."

"Saw her once at Newstead Abbey," yawned Brummell, wearily, dusting his cuffs. "Corpulent termagant and gave George no end of a row. He used to call her his 'maternal war-whoop.' My own parents—poor good people!—died long ago," he added reflectively; "—cut their throats eating peas with a knife."

CHAPTER VI

WHAT THE DEAD MAY KNOW

Gordon was alone in the vehicle, for Fletcher rode outside. He set his face to the fogged pane, catching the panorama of dark hedges, gouged gravelly runnels and stretches of murky black, with occasional instantaneous sense of detail—dripping bank, sodden rhododendron and mildewed masonry—vivid in a dull, yellow, soundless flare of July lightning. A gauze of unbroken grayness, a straggling light—the lodge. A battlemented wall plunging out of the darkness—and Gordon saw the Abbey, its tiers of ivied cloisters uninhabited since Henry the Eighth battered the old pile to ruin, its gaunt and unsightly forts built for some occupant's whim, and the wavering, fog-wreathed lake reflecting lighted windows. This was Newstead in which the bearers of his title had lived and died, the gloomy seat of an ancient house stained by murder and insanity, of which he was the sole representative.

What was he thinking as he sat in the gloomy dining-room, with Rushton, the footman he had trained to his own service, standing behind his chair? Of his mother first of all. He had never, even as a child, distinguished a sign of real tenderness in her moments of tempes-

tuous caresses. His maturer years had grown to regard her with a half-scornful, half good-humored tolerance. He had shrugged at her tempers, dubbing her "The Honorable Kitty" or his "Amiable Alecto." His letters to her had shown only a nice sense of filial duty; many of them began with "Dear Madam"; more had been signed simply with his name. Yet now he felt an aching hope that in her seclusion she had not seen the unkindest of the stories of him. His half-sister—now on her way from the north of England—absorbed with her family cares, would have missed the brunt of the attacks; his mother had been within their range. He recalled with a pang that she had treasured with a degree of pride a single review of his earliest book which had not joined in the sneering chorus.

He pushed back his chair, dismissed the footman, and alone passed to the hall and ascended the stair. At the turn of the balustrade a shaded lamp drowsed like a monster glow-worm. In his own room a low fire burned, winking redly from the coronetted bed-posts, and a lighted candle stood on the dressing-table. He looked around the familiar apartment a moment uncertainly, then crossed to a carved cabinet above a writing-desk and took therefrom a bottle of claret. The cabinet had belonged to his father, dead many years before. Gordon thought of him as he stood with the bottle in his hand, staring fixedly at the dull, carved ebony of the swinging door.

His father! "Mad Jack Gordon" the world had called him when he ran away with the Marchioness of Carmathen to break her heart! Handsome he had been still when he married for her money the heiress of

Gight, Gordon's mother. A stinging memory recalled the only glimpse he had ever had of that father—a tall man in uniform on an Aberdeen street, looking critically at a child with a lame leg.

Gordon winced painfully. He felt with a sharper agony the sensitive pang of the cripple, the shame of misshapenness that all his life had clung like an old-man-of-the-sea. It had not only stung his childhood; it had stolen from him the romance of his youth—the one gleam that six years ago had died.

Six years! For a moment time fell away like rotten shale from about a crystal. The room, the wine-cabinet, faded into a dim background, and on this, as if on a theater curtain, dissolving pictures painted themselves flame-like.

He was back in his Harrow days now, at home for his last vacation.

"George," his mother had remarked one day, looking up from a letter she was reading, "I've some news for you. Take out your handkerchief, for you will need it."

"Nonsense! What is it?"

"Mary Chaworth is married."

"Is that all?" he had replied coldly; but an expression, peculiar, impossible to describe, had passed over his face. He had never afterward seen her or spoken her name.

"Mary!" he murmured, and his hand set down the bottle on the table. Love—such love as his verses told of—he had come to consider purely subjective, a mirage, a simulacrum to which actual life possessed no counterpart. Yet at that moment he was feeling the wraith of

an old thrill, his nostrils smelling a perfume like a dead pansy's ghost.

He withdrew his hand from the bottle and his fingers clenched. How it hurt him—the sudden stab! For memory had played him a trick; it had dragged a voice out of the past. It was *her* voice—her words that she had uttered in a careless sentence meant for other ears, one that through those years had tumbled and reëchoed in some under sea-cavern of his mind—*"Do you think I could ever care for that lame boy?"*

He smiled grimly. She had been right. Nature had set him apart, made him a loup-garou, a solitary hobgoblin. He had been unclubbable, *sauvage,* even at Cambridge. And yet he had had real friendships there; one especially.

Gordon's free hand fumbled for his fob and his fingers closed on a little cornelian heart. It had been a keepsake from his college classmate, Matthews, drowned in the muddy waters of the Cam.

He released the bottle hurriedly, strode to the window and flung it open. A gust of rain struck his face and spluttered in the candle, and the curtain flapped like the wing of some ungainly bird. Out in the dark, beneath a clump of larches, glimmered whitely the monument he had erected to "Boatswain," his Newfoundland. The animal had gone mad.

"Some curse hangs over me and mine!" he muttered. "I never could keep alive even a dog that I liked or that liked me!"

A combined rattle and crash behind him made him turn. The wind had blown shut the door of the cabinet with a smart bang, and a yellow object, large and

round, had toppled from its shelf, fallen and rolled to his very feet.

He started back, his nerves for the instant shaken. It was a skull, mottled like polished tortoise-shell, mounted in dull silver as a drinking cup. He had unearthed the relic years before with a heap of stone coffins amid the rubbish of the Abbey's ruined priory—grim reminder of some old friar—and its mounting had been his own fancy. He had forgotten its very existence.

Now, as it lay supine, yet intrusive, the symbol at one time of lastingness and decay, it filled him with a painful fascination.

Picking it up, he set it upright on the desk, seized the bottle, knocked off its top against the marble mantel and poured the fantastic goblet full.

"Death and life!" he mused. "One feeds the other, each in its turn. Life! yet it should not be too long; I have no conception of any existence which duration would not render tiresome. How else fell the angels? They were immortal, heavenly and happy. It is the lastingness of life that is terrible; I see no horror in a dreamless sleep."

He put out his hand to the goblet, but withdrew it.

"No—wait!" he said, and seating himself at the desk, he seized a pen. The lines he wrote, rapidly and with scarcely an alteration, were to live for many a long year—index fingers pointing back to that dark mood that consumed him then:

"Start not—nor deem my spirit fled:
In me behold the only skull,
From which, unlike a living head,
Whatever flows is never dull.

I lived, I loved, I quaffed, like thee:
I died: let earth my bones resign.
Fill up—thou canst not injure me;
The worm hath fouler lips than thine.

Better to hold the sparkling grape,
Than nurse the earth-worm's slimy brood;
And circle in the goblet's shape
The drink of gods, than reptile's food.

Quaff while thou canst: another race,
When thou and thine, like me, are sped,
May rescue thee from earth's embrace,
And rhyme and revel with the dead."

He repeated the last stanza aloud and raised the goblet in both hands.

"Rhyming and revelling—what else counts? To drink the wine of youth to the dregs and then—good night! Is there anything beyond? Who knows? He who can not tell! Who tells us there is? He who does not know!"

Did the dead know?

He set the wine down, pushing it from him, sprang up, seized the candle and entered the room on the other side of the corridor. The bed-curtains were drawn close and a Bible lay open on the night-stand. He wondered with a kind of impersonal pity if the book had held comfort for her at the last.

He held the candle higher so its rays lighted the page: *But the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind. . . . In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning!*

It stared at him plainly in black letters, an age-old

agony of wretchedness. Had this been the keynote of her lonely, fitful, vehement life? Had years of misery robbed her—as it had robbed him, too? A distressed doubt, like a dire finger of apprehension, touched him; he put out his hand and drew aside the curtains.

Looking, he shuddered. Death had lent her its mystery, its ineffaceable dignity. He recognized it with a new and inexplicable feeling, like rising from the grave. Back of the placid look, in abeyance, in the stirlessness of the unringed hands—she had lost her wedding-ring years ago—some quality, strange, unintimate, lay confronting him. He remembered his words to Hobhouse in the street—words that had not been cold on his lips when he read Fletcher's message. Ever since, they had lain rankling like a raw burn in some crevice of his brain. "Lame brat!" And yet, beneath her frantic rages, under the surface he had habitually disregarded, what if in her own way she had really loved him!

A clutching pain took possession of him, a sense of physical sickness and anguish. He dropped the curtain, and stumbled from the room, down the long stair, calling for the footman.

"Rushton," he shouted, "get the muffles! Let us have a bout like the old times." He threw off his coat, pushed the chairs aside and bared his arms. "The gloves, Rushton, and be quick about it!"

The footman hesitated, a half-scared expression in his look.

"Never fear," said Gordon, and laughed—a tightening laugh that strained the cords of his throat. "Put them on! That's right! What are you staring at? Do you think she will hear you? Not she! Put up your

hands—so! Touched, by the Lord! Not up to your old style, Rushton! You never used to spar so villainously. You will disgrace the fancy. Ah-h!" And he knocked him sprawling.

Rushton scrambled to his feet as the housekceper entered, dismay upon her mask-like relic of a face. Gordon was very white and both noticed that his eyes were full of tears.

Long after midnight, when the place was quiet, the housekeeper heard an unaccustomed sound issuing from the chamber where the dead woman lay. She took a light and entered. The candle had burned out, and she saw Gordon sitting in the dark beside the bed.

He spoke in a broken voice:

"Oh, Mrs. Muhl," he said, "she was my mother! After all, one can have but one in this world, and I have only just found it out!"

CHAPTER VII

THE YOUTH IN FLEET PRISON

Behind the closed shutters of the book-shop which bore the sign of "The Juvenile Library," in the musty room where George Gordon had burned the errant copies of his ubiquitous Satire, old William Godwin sat reading by a guttering candle, Livy's Roman History in the original. It was his favorite book, and in the early evenings, when not writing his crabbed column for the *Courier,* or caustic diatribes for the reviews, he was apt to be reading it. A sound in the living-room above drew his eyes from the black-letter page.

"Jane!" he called morosely—"Jane Clermont!"

A lagging step came down the stair, and a girl entered, black-eyed, creole in effect. Her cheeks held the flame of the wild-cherry leaf.

"Where is your sister?"

"I have no sister."

The old man struck the table with his open hand. "Where is Mary, I say?"

"At the door."

"Go and see what she is doing."

The girl stood still, regarding her stepfather with a look that under its beauty had a sullen half-contempt.

"Why don't you do as I tell you?"

"I'm not going to be a spy for you, even if you *did* marry my mother. I'm tired of it."

The anger on the old man's face harshened. "If you were my own flesh and blood," he said sternly, "I would flog that French impudence of yours to death. As long as you eat my bread, you will obey me."

She looked at him with covert mockery on her full lips.

"I'm not a child any longer," she said as she turned flauntingly away; "I could earn my bread easier than by dusting tumble-down book-shelves. Do you think I don't know that?"

To William Godwin this defiant untutored girl had been a thorn in the side—a perpetual slur and affront to the irksome discipline he laid upon his own pliant Mary, the child of that first wife whose loss had warped his manhood. Now he saw her as a live danger, a flagrant menace whose wildness would infect his own daughter. It was this red-lipped vixen who was teaching her the spirit of disobedience!

He raised his voice and called sharply: "Mary!"

There was no answer, and he shuffled down the shabby hall to the street door. The old man glowered at the slender, beardless figure of the youth who stood with her—the brown, long coat with curling lamb's-wool collar and cuffs, its pockets bulging with mysterious books. In a senile rage, he ordered his daughter indoors.

Passers-by stopped to stare at the object of his rancor, standing uncertainly in the semi-dusk, a brighter ap-

parition, with luminous eyes and extravagant locks. Words came thickly to the old man; he launched into invective, splenetic and intemperate, at which the listeners tittered.

As it chanced, a pedestrian heard the name he mouthed—a man sharp-featured and ill dressed. With a low whistle he drew a soiled slip of paper from his pocket and consulted it by a street lamp, his grimy forefinger running down the list of names it contained.

"I thought so. I've a knack for names," he muttered, and shouldered through the bystanders.

"Not so fast, young master," he said, laying his hand on the youth's arm; "t'other's the way to the Fleet."

The other drew back with a gesture of disgust. "The Fleet!" he echoed.

"Aye," said the bailiff, winking to the crowd; "the pretty jug for folk as spend more than they find in pocket; with a nice grating to see your friends so genteel like."

Breaking from her father's hand, the girl in the doorway ran out with fear in her blue eyes.

"Oh, where are you taking him?" she cried.

The fellow smirked. "I'm just going to show his honor to a hotel I know, till he has time to see his pal Dellevelly of Golden Square to borrow a tidy eighteen pound ten, which a bookseller not so far off will be precious glad to get."

"Eighteen pounds!" gasped the youth, with a hysteric laugh. "Debtors' prison for only eighteen pounds! But I have the books still—he can have them back."

"After you've done with 'em, eh?" said the bailiff.

"Oh, I know your young gentlemen's ways. Come along."

"Father!" cried the girl, indignantly, as the bailiff dropped a heavy grasp on the lamb's-wool collar. "You'll not let them take Shelley. You'll wait for the money, father."

"Go into the house!" thundered the old man. "He's a good-for-nothing vagabond, I tell you!" He thrust her back, and the slammed door shut between her and the youth standing in the bailiff's clutch, half-wonderingly and disdainfully, like a bright-eyed, restless fox amid sour grapes.

"Go to your room!" commanded her father, and the girl slowly obeyed, dashing away her tears, while the old bookseller went back to the cluttered shop and his reading of Livy's Roman History.

In the chamber the girl entered, Jane Clermont looked up half-scornfully.

"I heard it all," she burst; "you are a little fool to take it—scolding you like a child, and before all those people!"

Mary opened a bureau drawer and took out a small rosewood box containing her one dearest possession. As she stood with her treasure in her hand, Jane jumped to her feet.

"I've borne it as long as I can myself," she cried under her breath. "I'm going to run away before I am a fortnight older."

"Run away? Where?"

Jane had begun to dance noiselessly on tiptoe with swift bacchante movements. "I'm going to be an ac-

tress," she confided, as she stood at a *pirouette*. "I've been to see Mr. Sheridan—the *great* Mr. Sheridan—and he's promised to get me a trial in a real part at Drury Lane!". She paused, struck with the determination in the other's face. "What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to Shelley."

"Good! I'll go with you. But you have no money. How can you help him?"

Mary held out the little box.

"Your mother's brooch!" cried Jane. "Do you really care as much as that for him?"—a little satirically.

Her companion was dressing for the street with rapid, uncertain fingers. "It's all I have," she answered.

They sat in silence till they heard the outer door bolted and knew the old man below had gone to his own room. Then they stole softly down the creaking stair, undid the outer door cautiously and went out into the evening bustle.

The pavements were crowded, and Mary clung to her companion's arm, but Jane walked nonchalantly, her dark eyes snapping with adventure. Not a few turned to gaze at her piquant beauty. To one whose way led in the same direction it brought a thought of a distant land.

"In a Suliote shawl she might be a maid of Missolonghi!" mused George Gordon, as he strode across Fleet market behind the two girls. "Greece! I wonder when I shall see it again!"

A shade of melancholy was in his face as he walked on, but not discontent. The resentment of his London home-coming and the desolation of that first black night at Newstead he had overcome. With the companionship of his sister and in the calm freshness of frosty lake and

rolling wind-washed moor he had recovered some of the buoyant spirits so suddenly stunned by the impact of the slanders that had met him. The London papers he had left unopened, from a sensitive dread of seeing the recital of his mother's well-known eccentricities, which her death might furnish excuse for recalling. His new book, whose stanzas stood like mental mile-posts of his journey, had almost finished its progress through the press. In its verses he hoped to stand for something more than the petty cavilling of personal paragraphists. It was to his publisher's he was bound this night when that wistful thought of the shores he best loved had shadowed his mood.

Crossing the open space on which faced the dark brick front and barred windows of the Fleet Prison, he saw the two girlish forms pause before its dismal entrance, where stood the shirt-sleeved warden, pipe in mouth. What errand could have brought them there unaccompanied at such an hour, he wondered.

Just then the clock of St. Dunstan's-in-the-West began a ponderous stroke, and the warden knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"Eight o'clock," he announced gruffly. "Prison's closed."

A cry of dismay fell from Mary's lips—a cry freighted with tears. "Then we can't get poor Bysshe!"

Gordon turned back and approached the dingy portal. "I have a fancy to see the inside of the old rookery, warden," he said. "Perhaps these visitors may enter with me." His hand was in his pocket and a jingle caught the warden's acute ear. The gruff demeanor of the custodian merged precipitately into the obsequious.

He pushed open the gate with alacrity and preceded them into the foul area of the prison.

Mary threw Gordon a quick glance of gratitude as she passed into the warden's office—to return without the little rosewood box. Across the look had flitted a shudder at the shouts and oaths that tainted the inclosure, and as she emerged he caught the gleam of relief with which she saw him still in the court.

A moment later the bailiff, who had figured in the scene before Godwin's shop, was leading the way along a noisome gallery. It was littered with refuse of vegetable and provision-men who cried their wares all day up and down. At one side gaped a coffee-house, at the other an ordinary, both reeking with stale odors and tobacco-smoke, and a noisy club was meeting in the taproom. Laughter and the click of glasses floated in the air, a suffocating atmosphere of tawdry boisterousness.

Jane Clermont stole more than one sidelong glance as Gordon's uneven step followed. At length the bailiff paused and unlocked a barred door. Mary knocked, but there was no answer; she pushed the door open and the girls entered.

From his station in the background, Gordon saw a dingy chamber, possessing as furniture only a cot, a chair, and a narrow board mantel, on which a candle was burning, stuck upright in its own tallow. Standing before this breast-high impromptu table, a pamphlet spread open upon it, his shoulders stooped, his eyes devouring the page, was the room's solitary occupant. He had thrown off the long coat with the lamb's-wool trimming, his collar was open leaving his throat unfettered, and his long locks hung negligently about his face.

"Bysshe!" cried Mary, ecstatically.

The figure by the mantel turned, flinging back his tumbled hair as if to toss away his abstraction.

"Mary!" he echoed, and sprang forward. "What are you doing here?"

"We've come for you. The debt is cancelled. To think of your being shut up here!" she said with a shiver, as a burst of noises rose from the court below.

"Cancelled!" he repeated with a hesitating laugh. "Your father would better have let me stay, Mary. I shall be just as bad again in a month. I couldn't resist buying a book if it meant the gallows!"

She did not undeceive him, but handed him his great-coat, and gathered the volumes tossed on to the couch to stuff into its bulging pockets.

Jane had been scrutinizing the room. "What's that?" she inquired, pointing to a plate of food which sat on the far end of the mantel, as though it had been impatiently pushed aside.

The youth colored uneasily. "Why, I suppose that was my supper," he said shamefacedly; "I must have forgotten to eat it."

Jane laughed, picked up the pamphlet for which the meal had been forgotten, and read the title aloud. "'Twelve Butchers for a Jury and a Jeffreys for a Judge. An Appeal against the Pending Frame-Breakers Bill to legalize the Murder of the Stocking-Weavers. By Percy Bysshe Shelley!'"

"Frame-Breakers!" she finished disdainfully. "Stocking-Weavers!"

Shelley's delicate face flushed as he folded the pamphlet.

"Are they not men?" he exclaimed. "And being men, have they no natural rights? Is British law to shoot them down like wild beasts for the defense of their livelihood? Oh, if I were only a peer, with a voice in Parliament!" He spoke with fierce emphasis, but in tone soft, vibrating and persuasive—a sustained, song-like quality in it.

"Percy Bysshe Shelley!" Gordon's mind recited the name wonderingly. He remembered a placard he had seen in a book-shop window: "For writing the which he stands expelled from University College, Oxford." So this was the heir to a baronetcy, the author of "Queen Mab," the stripling iconoclast who had laughed at fulminating attorney-generals, had fled to Lynmouth beach —where he had spent his days making little wooden boxes, inclosed in resined bladders, weighted with lead and equipped with tiny mast and sail, and had sent them, filled with his contraband writings, out on the rollers of the Atlantic in the hope that they might reach some free mind on the Irish shore or on some ocean brig.

Gordon left his post and went slowly down the stair, past the blackened office, wherein the warden sat admiringly fingering the brooch that had wiped out a debt to old William Godwin the bookseller, and into the street.

The words of the youth he had seen sounded in his brain: "If I were only a peer, with a voice in Parliament!"

That voice was his. When had he used it for his fellow-man?

CHAPTER VIII

A SAVAGE SPUR

John Murray, *anax* of publishers, sat that evening in his shop in Fleet Street. He was in excellent humor, having dined both wisely and well. His hair was sparse above a smooth-shaven, oval face, in which lurked good-humor and the wit which brought to his drawing-room the most brilliant men of literary London, as his genius as a publisher had given him the patronage of the greatest peers of the kingdom, and even of the prince regent. His black coat was of the plainest broadcloth and his neck-cloth of the finest linen. Dallas sat opposite, his scholarly face keen and animated. The frayed waistcoat was no longer in evidence, and the worn hat had given place to a new broad brim.

"Yes," said the man of books, "we shall formally publish to-morrow. I wrote his lordship, asking him to come up to town, to urge him to eliminate several of the stanzas in case we reprint soon. They will only make him more enemies. He has enough now," he added ruefully.

"You still think as well of it?"

The publisher pushed back his glasses with enthusiasm. "It is splendid—unique." He pulled out a desk-drawer and took therefrom a printed volume, poising it proudly, as a father dandles his first-born, and, turn-

ing its pages, with lifted forefinger and rolling voice read:

"Fair Greece! sad relic of departed worth!
Immortal, though no more; though fallen, great!
Who now shall lead thy scattered children forth,
And long accustomed bondage uncreate?
Not such thy sons who whilom did await,
The hopeless warriors of the willing doom,
In bleak Thermopylæ's sepulchral strait—
Oh! who that gallant spirit shall resume,
Leap from Eurotas' banks, and call thee from the tomb?

Yet are thy skies as blue, thy crags as wild;
Sweet are thy groves, and verdant are thy fields,
Thine olive ripe as when Minerva smiled,
And still his honeyed wealth Hymettus yields;
There the blithe bee his fragrant fortress builds,
The freeborn wanderer of thy mountain air;
Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds,
Still in his beam Mendeli's marbles glare;
Art, glory, freedom fail, but Nature still is fair.

Hereditary bondsmen! Know ye not
Who would be free themselves must strike the blow?
By their right arms the conquest must be wrought.
Will Gaul or Muscovite redress ye? No!
True, they may lay your proud despoiler low,
But not for you will freedom's altars flame.
Shades of the Helots! triumph o'er your foe!
Greece! change thy lords, thy state is still the same;
Thy glorious day is o'er, but not thine years of shame."

He broke off abruptly. "The pamphleteers have been busy since he landed," he admitted, a trace of shrewdness edging his tone, "but the abuse seems to have dulled now. I have been waiting for that to issue."

"His lordship, sir," announced a clerk, and the proprietor sprang to his feet to greet his visitor.

Gordon's eyes lighted with pleasure as they fell on Dallas, noting the change the few months of relief from the galling pressure of poverty had wrought in the features no less than the attire. "Are the types ready?" he asked the publisher.

"Yes, my lord. We distribute to-morrow. I have marked a few stanzas, however, that I hesitate to include in a further edition. Here they are. You will guess my reason."

The other looked, his eyes reading, but his mind thinking further than the page.

> "London! Right well thou know'st the hour of prayer;
> Then thy spruce citizen, washed artisan
> And smug apprentice gulp their weekly air."

The lines were bitter indeed! They had been written when he was still smarting under the lash of his earlier critics, in the first months of his journeyings, before the great wind of travel had swept his mind clear and sweet for the latter harmonies of his poesy. In them lay the hurt sneer of a personal resentment—the resentment that had been in his soul when he sailed from England; that had sprung alive again on his return, when he learned that his enemies had employed his absence to bespatter his name with lying tales.

Yet that was past. He had cast it behind him. And should he carry the old spirit into this better and nobler work, to deflect his message from its significance into cheaper channels of abuse? His thought recurred to the youth in the bare room of the Fleet. Even there, in a debtors' prison, Shelley had forgot his own plight, and sunk individual resentment in desire for wider

justice! Should he be less big in tolerance than that youth? So he asked himself, as the publisher casually fluttered the leaves of an uncut review which the clerk had laid on his desk.

All at once John Murray's eyes stopped, fixed on a page. He made an exclamation of irritation and chagrin, and pushed it out toward Gordon. It was a fresh copy of the *Scourge,* and the leader Gordon read, while the publisher paced the floor with nervously angry strides, was the one in which had been steeped the anonymous venom of William Godwin the bookseller—a page whose caption was his own name:

"It may be asked whether to be a simple citizen is more disgraceful than to be the illegitimate descendant of a murderer; whether to labor in an honorable profession be less worthy than to waste the property of others in vulgar debauchery; whether to be the son of parents of no title be not as honorable as to be the son of a profligate father and a mother of demoniac temper, and, finally, whether a simple university career be less indicative of virtue than to be held up to the derision and contempt of his fellow students, as a scribbler of doggerel and a bear-leader, to be hated for repulsiveness of manners and shunned by every man who would not be deemed a profligate without wit and trifling without elegance."

A cold dead look of mingled pain and savagery grew on his face as he read. Then he sprang up and went to the door. Behind him Dallas had seized the review and was reading it with indignation. The publisher was still pacing the floor: "What an unfortunate advertisement!" he was muttering.

Gordon stared out into the lamp-lighted street. The

bitter malignancy which had spared not even the grave in its slander, numbed and maddened him. His breath came hard and a mist was before his eyes. Opposite the shop loomed the blackened front of the old church of St. Dunstan's-in-the-West; as he stood, the two wooden figures of wild men on the clock which projected over the street struck the hour with their clubs, and a late newsboy passed crying tiredly: *"News* and *Chronicle!* All about the Frame-Breakers shot in Nottingham!"

The volume the publisher had given him was still in Gordon's hand. He turned into the room and flung it on the desk.

"No," he said with harsh bluntness. "Not a line shall be altered! If every syllable were a rattlesnake and every letter a pestilence, they should not be expunged! Let those who can not swallow, chew it. I will have none of your damned cutting and slashing, Murray. I will battle my way against them all, like a porcupine!"

Then he wheeled and plunged into the clack and babble of Fleet Street's pedestrians.

London would be reading his effusion when his book appeared to-morrow—reading it and talking about it. "The curs!" he said to himself, as he walked fiercely down the Strand.

The cry of the newsboy ahead came back to him like a dulled refrain. He turned into Whitehall at Charing Cross, and looked up to find himself opposite Melbourne House. He remembered suddenly the clear-eyed girl to whom he had offered his Satire and whose coin was still in his waistcoat pocket: she had said "Melbourne House"

that day to the coachman. He wondered with a curious levity whether she would read the *Scourge*.

Before the Houses of Parliament stood a double line of carriages.

"It's the debate in the Lords on the Frame-Breakers bill," he heard one passer-by inform another, as he stared frowning at the high Gothic entrance. That was the measure against which Shelley's pamphlet had been written.

The pain was dulling and the old unyielding devil of challenge and fight was struggling uppermost. " 'The illegitimate descendant of a murderer!' "—Gordon muttered—" 'a scribbler of doggerel and a bear-leader!' "

Then suddenly he raised his head. His eyes struck fire like gray flint. "I am a peer," he said through his teeth, and strode through the door which he had never entered in his life, but once.

An hour later there was a sensation in John Murray's shop, where Dallas still sat. It was furnished by Sheridan, who came in taking snuff and shaking his gray head with delight.

"Heard the news?" he cried, chuckling. "George Gordon just made a great speech—best speech by a lord since the Lord knows when! I was in the gallery with Lady Melbourne and Lady Caroline Lamb. He opposed the Frame-Breakers bill. They say it means the death of the measure. You should have seen the big-wigs flock to offer congratulations! Why, even the Lord Chancellor came down from the woolsack to shake hands with him!" He paused out of breath, with a final "What d'ye think of that?"

"Well, well!" ejaculated the publisher, taking off his glasses and polishing them with vigor. He looked at Dallas.

"What an unfortunate advertisement!" quoth that gentleman, pulling his nose. "Eh?"

John Murray brought his fist down on the desk with a force that made the ink-well leap. "By the foot of Pharaoh!" he swore, "we'll take advantage of it; it will discount that attack in the *Scourge*. The papers have their copies of the book already. I'll send them word. We'll not wait till to-morrow. We'll issue TO-NIGHT!"

He rang the bell sharply and gave a clerk hurried orders which in a few moments made the office a scene of confusion.

When Lady Melbourne entered Melbourne House with her daughter-in-law that evening—about the time a swarm of messengers were departing from the Fleet Street shop carrying packages of books addressed to the greatest houses of London—she found her stately niece, Annabel Milbanke, reading in the drawing-room.

Lady Caroline's eyes were very bright as she threw off her wraps. She went to the piano and played softly—long dissolving arpeggios that melted into a rich minor chord. Presently she began to sing the same Greek air that she had sung once before with a pathos that had surprised and stirred even the colder, calculate Annabel.

"Caro, what is that?" asked Lady Melbourne, unclasping her sables before the fireplace. The singer did not hear her.

"It's a song Mr. Hobhouse sent her when he was traveling in the East," Annabel volunteered.

Lady Melbourne's thoughts were not wholly on the song. She had seen the book her niece had been reading —it was George Gordon's long famous Satire. She picked it up, noting the name on the title-page with approval. She had been pondering since she left the ladies' gallery of the House of Lords, and her thoughts had concerned themselves intimately with its author, the young peer whose maiden speech had challenged such surprise and admiration. His name went perpetually accompanied by stories of eccentricities and wild life at college, of tamed bears and hidden orgies at Newstead with Paphian dancing girls, of a secret establishment at Brighton, of adventures and *liaisons* the most reckless in cities of the Orient. Yet he had stanch supporters, too.

"Annabel," she said presently, and with singular emphasis, "George Gordon is in town. He spoke in Parliament this evening. I am going to ask him to dinner here to-morrow—to meet you."

The refrain Lady Caroline was singing broke queerly in the middle, and her fingers stumbled on the keys. The others did not see the expression that slipped swiftly across her face, the rising flush, the indrawn, bitten under lip, nor did they catch the undertone in her laugh as she ran up the stair.

In her own room she unlocked a metal frame that stood on her dressing table. It held a pencil portrait, begged long before from Hobhouse. A vivid, conscious flush was in her cheeks as she looked at it.

"For a woman of fire and dreams!" she murmured. "Not for a thing of snow! Never—never!"

CHAPTER IX

GORDON WAKES AND FINDS HIMSELF FAMOUS

The sharp jostle of the pavement; the rattle of the crossings; the "this way, m'lord!" of dodging link-boys and the hoarse warning of the parochial watch to reckless drivers; street lamps flaring redly in the raw and heavy night; the steaming tap-rooms along the Thames; the cut-throat darkness and the dank smell of the slow turgid current under London bridge. Still Gordon walked while the hours dragged till the traffic ebbed to midnight's lull—on and on, without purpose or direction. It was dawn before he entered his lodgings, fagged and unstrung, with blood pumping and quivering in his veins like quicksilver.

He let himself in with his own key. The door of the ante-chamber which his valet occupied was ajar. Fletcher had been waiting for his master; he was dressed and seated in a chair, but his good-humored, oleaginous face was smoothed in slumber.

Gordon went into his sitting-room, poured out a half goblet of cognac and drank it to the last drop, feeling gratefully its dull glow and grudging release from nervous tension.

His memory of his speech was a sort of rough-drawn composite impression whose salient points were color

and movement: the wide groined roof, the peaked and gilded throne, the crimson woolsack, the long, red morocco sofas set thickly, the rustle in the packed galleries, and peers leaning in their seats to speak in low tones with their neighbors.

The majority there had not known him, but his paleness, his beauty, his curling hair, and most of all his lameness, told his name to the few. The few whispered it to the many, they in turn gazed and whispered too, and almost before he had uttered a word, the entire assemblage knew that the speaker was the notorious writer of the famous Satire whose winged Apollonian shafts had stung the whole poetic cult of England—the twenty-four-year-old lord whose name was coupled in the newspapers with unlovely tales of bacchanals in Madrid, duellos in Malta and Gibraltar, and harem intrigues in Constantinople; tales half-believed even by those who best knew what enemies his vitriolic pen had made and their opportunities for slander.

Gordon had acted in a mental world created by excitement. His pride had spurred him, in a moment of humiliation, to thrust himself into the place he of right should occupy. Mere accident had chosen the debate; the casual circumstance of a visit to the Fleet Prison had determined his position in it. Given these, his mind had responded clearly, spontaneously, with a grasp and brilliancy of which he himself had been scarcely conscious. He remembered, with a curious impersonal wonder as he walked, the sharp, straining, mental effort before that battery of glances coldly formal at first, then surprised into approval and at length warmed to enthusiastic applause; the momentary hush as he sat down;

the buzz of undammed talk crisped by the tap of the gavel; the press of congratulations which followed him to the outer air.

Now, as he stood in his room in the gray light of the early morning, a feeling of distaste came over him. Why had he spoken? Had it been from any sympathy for the cause he championed? Was it not rather in a mere spirit of hurt pride and resentment—the same resentment that had made him refuse to eliminate the bitter stanzas from his book? A flush rose to his brow. How unworthy had been his motive beside that of the stripling who had written against that same bill!

A sense of shame rushed through him. In the late weeks at Newstead he had felt how small were such impulses. He had told himself that he would sing for his song's own sake and keep it free from the petty and the retaliative; that he would live in the azure his own mind created and let the world's praise and abuse alike go by. Had he kept this determination?

He poured out a second tumbler of the liquor and drank it.

Neither claret nor champagne ever affected him, but the double draft of brandy brought an immediate intoxication that grew almost instantly to a gray giddiness. He pushed a couch to the wall, shoved a screen between it and the dawn-lit windows, threw himself down without undressing and fell into a moveless sleep that lasted many hours. The reaction, his physical weariness and both topped by the cognac, made his slumber log-like, a dull, dead blank of nothingness, unbroken by any sound.

Fletcher came in yawning, looked into his master's

sleeping-room and went out shaking his head. Later he brought a pile of letters, and relaid the fire. Noon came —one, two o'clock—and meanwhile there were many knocks upon the door, from each of which the valet returned with larger eyes to add another personal card or note to the increasing pile on the table.

As the clock struck three, he opened the door upon two of the best-liked of his master's old-time town associates. They were Tom Moore, with a young ruddy face of Irish humor, and Sheridan, clad to sprucery as if Apollo had sent him a birthday suit, and smiling like a rakish gray-haired cherub.

"Fletcher, where's your master?"

"His lordship is out, Mr. Sheridan."

"The devil he is! Hang it, we'll wait then, Tom. Go and look for him, Fletcher."

"I shouldn't know where to look, sir. My lord didn't come in at all last night."

Sheridan whistled. "That's queer. Well, we'll wait a while,"—and they entered. As he saw the pile of newly arrived stationery, the older man threw his stick into the corner and smote Moore on the shoulder with a chuckle.

"I told them so!" he vociferated, wagging his head. "I told them so when his Satire first came out. Curse catch me, d'ye ever know of such a triumph? That speech was the spark to the powder. It was cute of Murray to issue last night. Every newspaper in town clapping its hands and bawling bigger adjectives. Genius and youth—ah, what a combination it is!"

He took a pinch of snuff and descended upon the heap of cards and billets, picking up each in turn

between thumb and forefinger and looking at it with a squint. "'Lord Carlisle,'" he read—"his guardian, eh? Wouldn't introduce him in the Lords two years ago. 'Colonel Greville'—wanted to fight George once for a line in his Satire about high-play in the Argyle Club! He's cooing gently now! Blue-tinted note—smells of violets. Humph! More notes—seven of 'em! Fletcher, you old humbug, d'ye know your master at this moment is the greatest man in London?"

"Yes, Mr. Sheridan."

"Oh, you do? Knew it all along, I suppose. Doesn't surprise you one bit, eh?"

"No, Mr. Sheridan."

"Curse catch me!—"

"Yes, Mr. Sheridan."

Moore laughed, and the older man, cackling at the valet's matter-of-fact expression, continued his task: "Card from the Bishop of London—Lord deliver us! Another letter—where have I seen that silver crest? Why, the Melbourne arms, to be sure! By the handwriting, it's from the countess herself. 'Lord Heathcote'—'Lord Holland.' It's electric! It's a contagion! All London is mad to-day, mad over George Gordon!"

"I passed Murray's shop an hour ago," declared Moore. "There was a string of carriages at the door like the entrance of Palace Yard. Murray told me he will have booked orders for fourteen thousand copies before night-fall."

As the other threw down the mass of stationery, he spied the bottle which Gordon had half emptied.

"Here's some cognac," he said. "Fletcher, some glasses. That's right. It's early in the day for brandy,

but 'better never than late,' as Hobhouse would say. We'll toast Gordon's success." He poured for both and the rims clicked.

"To 'Childe Harold'!" cried Moore.

With the glasses at their lips, a voice broke forth behind them declaiming *ex tempore:*

> "My boat is on the shore,
> And my bark is on the sea;
> But before I go, Tom Moore,
> Here's a double health to *thee!*"

Moore dragged away the screen. Gordon was standing by the couch; his tumbled hair and disordered dress showed he had just awakened. His face was flushed, his eyes sparkling.

"You villain!" expostulated Moore; "it's you we're toasting."

> "—And with water or with wine,
> The libation I would pour
> Should be peace with thine and mine,
> And—a health to *thee*, Tom Moore!"

"Gordon, you eavesdropper, have you read the papers?" Sheridan shouted.

"Not a line!"

"Curse catch me, you've heard us talking then! George, George, you've waked to find yourself famous!"

Gordon hardly felt their hand-clasps or heard their congratulatory small-talk. He almost ran to the window and flung it open, drawing the cool air into his lungs with a great respiration. His sleep had been crumpled and scattered by the fall of a walking-stick,

as the crackling of thin ice will spill and dissipate a crowd of skaters. He had caught snatches of conversation indistinctly as he shook off the leaden stupor of the intoxicant. "Every newspaper in town clapping its hands!" "All London mad over George Gordon!" His mind had conned the sentences dully at first, then with a gasping dart of meaning. His speech? No, it could not be that. Moore had spoken the name of his book, and he had known—realized in a flash, while he lay quivering. Then it was that he had leaped to his feet. Then he had voiced that impromptu toast, declaimed while he fought hard to repress his exultation, with every nerve thrilling a separate, savage triumph of its own.

He looked down. It was as fine a day as that on which Paradise was made, and the streets were alive. Several pedestrians stopped to stare up at him curiously. A carriage was passing, and he saw the gentleman it held speak to the lady by his side and point toward the building. Fame! To clamp shut the mouths of the scoundrels who maligned him and his! To feel the sting of the past covered with the soothing poultice of real reputation! To fling back the sneers of his enemies into their teeth. To be no longer singular, isolated, excommunicate—to have the world's smiles and its praise!

Yesterday seemed a dream. It was fading into an indistinguishable background, with the face of the bright-eyed youth in the Fleet Prison—and the dull shame he had felt at dawn.

He turned. "Pardon me if I play the host poorly today," he said; "I am ridiculously, fine-ladically nervous. I fear I must have retired drunk—a good old gentle-

manly vice—and am now at the freezing point of returning soberness."

Sheridan pushed him into his bedroom.

"Make your toilet, my boy," he told him good-naturedly. "We will wait,"—and Gordon resigned himself to the ministrations of Fletcher and the comfort of hot water and fine linen.

When he came back to find his visitors smoking, he had thrust all outward agitation under the surface. He was dressed in elegance, and a carnation was in the buttonhole of his white great-coat. There was less of melancholy curve to the finely-wrought lips, more of slumbrous fire in the gray-blue eyes.

"There's a soberer for you." Moore indicated the pile of sealed missives and pasteboards. "You'll certainly need a secretary."

Gordon's eye caught the Melbourne crest. He picked out the note from the rest hastily, with a vision flitting through his mind of a clear-eyed statuesque girl. While he was reading there was a double knock at the door which Fletcher answered.

A splendid figure stood on the threshold, arrayed as Solomon was not in all his glory, and the figure pushed his way in, with gorgeous disregard of the valet.

"Is his lordship in yet?" he simpered. "Eh? Stap my vitals, say it's Captain Brummell—George Brummell—and be quick about it. Ah!" he continued, raising his glass to his eye, as he distinguished the group, "there he is now, and old Sherry, too. I am your lordship's most obedient! I've been here twice this afternoon. You must come to Watier's Club with me, sir—I'll be sworn, I must be the one to introduce you! You

will all favor us, gentlemen, of course, as my guests. My chariot is at the door!"

"I thank you, Captain," Gordon answered, as he folded the note of invitation he had been reading and put it in his pocket, "but I cannot give myself the pleasure this afternoon. Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Moore will doubtless be charmed. I am promised within the hour to dinner—at Lady Melbourne's."

CHAPTER X

THE PRICE OF THE BAUBLE

Beau Brummell, from his seat in the bow-window, bowed with *empressement* as Gordon alighted from his carriage and ascended the steps of White's Club from an early dinner at Holland House.

"'Fore gad," admired the dandy, "what a coat! It becomes him as if he'd been hatched in it."

Lord Petersham at his elbow gazed with seconding approval. The somber elegance of the black velvet dress-coat, which Gordon wore close-buttoned, and the white rolling collar left open so as to expose the throat, served to heighten the pallor of his skin and set in high relief the handsome, patrician face above it.

"Still on his pedestal," observed Petersham. "Before long his *vertex sublimis* will displace enough stars to overthrow the Newtonian system! I hear Caro Lamb is not tired doing homage. His affair with Lady Oxford seems to be tapering."

"Women!" ejaculated Brummell. "He's a martyr to them. Stap my vitals, the beauties run after him because he won't make up to them. Treat women like fools, and they'll all worship you!"

To the pinnacle this implied, Gordon had risen at

a leap. He was the idol of fashionable London, the chief topic of frivolous boudoir gossip and intellectual table-talk. His person, his travels spangled with romantic tales, his gloom, his pride, his beauty, and the dazzle of his prodigious success, combined to bring him an unheard-of homage. His newest book was on every drawing-room table in the kingdom. He was made much of by Lady Jersey. Hostesses quarrelled over entertaining him, and ladies of every title below the blood-royal asked to be placed next him at dinner. The regent himself had asked him to Carlton House.

Each of his publications since that February day when he woke to fame and when the chariot of the incomparable Captain Brummell had set him down at Melbourne House, had had a like history. Each had won the same rapt praise, the same wondering homage to talent. If they missed the burning fervor of those earlier impassioned lines on Grecian liberty, if they held, each more clearly, an under-note of agnosticism, it was overlooked in delight at their freedom, their metrical sweep and seethe of feeling, the melancholy sea-surge and fret of their moods. His ancient detractors, whom his success had left breathless, constrained to innuendo, had added to his personality the tang of the audacious, of bizarre license, of fantastic eccentricity, that beckoned even while it repelled.

One would have thought Gordon himself indifferent to praise as to censure. The still dissatisfaction that came to him in the night hours in his tumbled study, when he remembered the strength and purpose that had budded in his soul in those early weeks at Newstead, he alone knew. The convention that had carped

at him before his fame he trod under foot. He frequented Manton's shooting-gallery, practised the broad sword at Angelo's, sparred with "Gentleman Jackson," the champion pugilist, in his rooms in Bond Street, and clareted and champagned at the Cocoa-Tree with Sheridan and Moore till five in the *matin*. Other men might conceal their harshest peccadilloes; Gordon concealed nothing. What he did he did frankly, with disdain for appearances. Hypocrisy was to him the soul's gangrene. He preferred to have the world think him worse than to think him better than he was.

His enemies in time had plucked up courage, revamped old stories and invented new; these seemed to give him little concern. He not only kept silence but declined to allow his friends, such as Sheridan and Hobhouse, to champion him. When the *Chronicle* barbed a sting with a reference to the enormous sums he was pocketing from his copyholds, he shrugged his shoulders. John Murray, his publisher, knew that the earnings of "The Giaour" had been given to a needy author; that "Zuleika" had relieved a family from the slavery of debt and sent them, hopeful colonists, to Australia.

Gordon passed into the club, bowing to the group in the bow-window with conventional courtesy, and entered the reading-room. It was September, but the night had turned cool, and he dropped into a chair before the hearth.

"Why does Lady Holland always have that damned screen between the whole room and the fire?" he grumbled half-humorously. "I who bear cold no better than an antelope, and never yet found a sun quite done to

my taste, was absolutely petrified, and couldn't even shiver. All the rest, too, looked as if they were just unpacked, like salmon from an ice-basket!"

A lackey in the club's regalia brought a tray of letters and set it beside him. Gordon lit a cigar before he examined them. They were the usual collection: a sprinkling of effusions from romantic *incognitas;* a graver tribute from Walter Scott; a pressing request for that evening from Lady Jersey.

"To meet Madame de Staël!" he mused. "I once travelled three thousand miles to get among silent people; and this lady writes octavos and talks folios. I have read her essay against suicide; if I heard her recite it, I might swallow poison."

The final note he lifted was written on blue-bordered paper, its corners embossed with tiny cockle-shells, and he opened it with a nettled frown.

"Poor Caro!" he muttered. "Why will you persist in imprudent things? Some day your epistle will fall into the lion's jaws, and then I must hold out my iron. I am out of practice, but I won't go to Manton's now. Besides," he added with a shrug, "I wouldn't return his shot. I used to be a famous wafer-splitter, but since I began to feel I had a bad cause to support, I have left off the exercise."

His face took on a deeper perplexity as he read the eccentric, curling hand:

". . . Gordon, do you remember that first dinner at Melbourne House—the day after your speech in the Lords? You gave me a carnation from your buttonhole. You said, 'I am told your ladyship likes all that is new and rare—for the moment!' Ah, that meeting was not only

for the moment with me, you know that! It has lasted ever since. I have never heard your name announced that it did not thrill every pulse of my body. I have never heard a venomous word against you that did not sting me, too."

Gordon held the letter in a candle-flame, and dropped it on the salver. As it crackled to a mass of glowing tinder, a step fell behind him. He looked up to see Moore.

"Tom," he said, his brow clearing, "I am in one of my most vaporish moments."

Moore seated himself on a chair-arm and poked the blackening twist of paper with his walking-stick. He smiled an indulgent smile of prime and experience.

"From which I conclude—" he answered sagely, "that you are bound to Drury Lane greenroom instead of to Lady Jersey's this evening."

Gordon's lips caught the edge of the other's smile.

"You are right. I'm going to let Jane Clermont brighten my mood. She is always interesting—more so off the stage than on. They are only hothouse roses that will bloom at Lady Jersey's. Jane is a wild tiger-lily. She has all the natural wit of the de Staël—a pity it must be wasted on the pit loungers! Heaven only knows why I ever go to their ladyships' infernal functions at all, for I hate bustle as I hate a bishop. Here I am, eternally stalking to parties where I shan't talk, I can't flatter, and I won't listen—except to a pretty woman. If one wants to break a commandment and covet his neighbor's wife, it's all very well. But to go out amongst the mere herd, without a motive, a

pleasure or a pursuit, of no more use than a sick butterfly—it begins to pall upon my soul!"

Moore's stick was still meditatively poking the charred paper. The ashes fell apart, and a tiny unburnt blue corner showed—it bore the familiar device of a cockle-shell. His lips puckered in a thoughtful whistle. Aloud he said:

"Why not adopt the conventional remedy?"

"I'm too lazy to shoot myself!"

"There's a more comfortable medicine than that."

Gordon's smile broke into a laugh. "Wedlock, eh? Reading the country newspapers and kissing one's wife's maid! To experience the superlative felicity of those foxes who have cut their tails and would persuade the rest to part with their brushes to keep them in countenance! All my coupled contemporaries—save you, Tom—are bald and discontented. Wordsworth and Southey have both lost their hair and good humor. But after all," he said, rising, "anything is better than these hypochondriac whimsies. In the name of St. Hubert, patron of antlers and hunters, let me be married out of hand. I don't care to whom, so it amuses anybody else and doesn't interfere with me in the daytime! By the way, can't you come down to Newstead for the shooting-season? Sheridan and Hobhouse are to be there, and my cellar is full though my head is empty. What do you say? You can plague us with songs, Sherry can write a new comedy, and I mean to let my beard grow, and hate you all."

His companion accepted with alacrity. "When shall we start?" he inquired, walking with the other to his carriage.

"At noon, to-morrow," Gordon replied. "Till then, good night. I commend you to the care of the gods—Hindoo, Scandinavian and Hellenic."

As the wheels clattered on, Gordon's mind was running in channels of discontent.

"I am *ennuyé*," he thought, "beyond my usual tense of that yawning verb I am always conjugating. At six-and-twenty one should be something—and what am I? Nothing but six-and-twenty, and the odd months. Six-and-twenty years, as they call them—why, I might have been a pasha by this time!"

The coach turned a corner, and he saw, a little way off, the lighted front of Drury Lane Theater. In the shadow of its stage-door stood a couple his sight did not distinguish, but the keen black eyes of one of them—a vivid, creole-looking girl—had noted with a quick instinctive movement the approach of the well-known carriage, now tangled in the moving stream.

The gaze of the man beside her—defiant, furtive, theatric and mustachioed, with hair falling thickly and shortly like a Moor's—followed her look.

"He was in the greenroom last night, too!" he said, with angry jealousy. "I saw him coming away."

"Suppose you did?" flung the girl with irritation. "Who are you, that I must answer for whom I see or know—yes, and for anything else? He *was* here, and so was Mr. Sheridan and Captain Brummell. I should like to know what you have to say about it!"

The other's cheek had flushed darkly.

"You used to have more time for me, Jane," he answered sullenly, "before you took up with the theater—

when you lived over the old book-shop and hadn't a swarm of idling dandies about you."

"I suppose his lordship there is an 'idling dandy'!" she retorted with fine sarcasm. "A dandy, and the most famous man in England! An idler, who gets a guinea a line for all he writes. What do you spend, pray, that your father in Wales didn't leave you? Tell me," she said curiously, her tone changing; "you were in the East when you were in the navy. Are all the stories they tell of George Gordon in Greece true? They say he himself is Conrad, the hero of his 'Corsair.' Was he so dreadfully wicked?"

He turned away his head, gnawing his lip. "I don't know," he returned doggedly, "and I care less. I know he's only amusing himself with you, Jane, and you know it, too—"

"And it's no amusement to you?" she prompted, with innate coquetry, dropping back into her careless tone. "If it isn't, don't come then. I shall try to get along, never fear. Why shouldn't I know fine people?" she went on, a degree less hardly. "I'm tired of this foggy, bread-and-butter life. It was bad enough at Godwin's stuffy house with poverty and a stepfather. I don't wonder Mary has run away to marry her Shelley! He'll be a baronet some day, and she can see life. I don't intend to be tied to London always, either—even with the playing! I want to know things and see something of the world. Why do *you* stay here? Why don't you go to sea again? I'm sure *I'd* like to."

"You know why I don't," he said, "well enough. I deserted the service once, besides. But I'd like to see the world—with you, Jane!"

He did not see the line that curved her lips, half-scornful, half-pitying, for his look had fastened on a figure in a ministerial cloak, who was passing on the pavement. The figure was Dr. James Cassidy, taking his evening walk with the under-curate of St. Dunstan's-in-the-West—an especially enjoyable hour with him.

Now, as Cassidy's insect eyes lifted, they fell on the oriental face in the shadow of the doorway with a sudden interrogative start. He took a step toward it, hesitatingly, but the curate was in the midst of a quotation from Eusebius, and the pause was but momentary. The girl's Moorish-looking companion had not moved, but his hands had clenched and his face had an ugly expression as Cassidy passed on.

"Only a resemblance," remarked the latter, as he proceeded. "The man in the doorway there reminded me of an ensign who deserted the *Pylades* once when we were lying at Bombay." His hand touched a broad white scar on his cheek. "I trust he may yet be apprehended —for the good of the service," he added softly.

Gordon's eyes, as the carriage picked its way, had been on the front of the theater, but they were preoccupied. He did not see the look of dislike from the mustachioed face in the shadow, nor the girl as she vanished through the stage-door. Yet, as it happened, the first glimpse of the theater had brought a thought of her.

"Fond, flippant, wild, elusive, alluring—the devil!" he mused. "That's Jane Clermont—she would furnish out a new chapter for Solomon's Song. The stage is her atmosphere: she came to it as naturally as a humming-bird to a garden of geraniums. Yet she will never

make a Siddons; she lacks purpose and she is—*méchante*. She appeals to the elemental, raw sense of the untamed and picturesque men own in common with savages. Nature made such women to cure man's ennui: they fit his mood. Jane Clermont was not born for fine ladies' fripperies. What is it she lacks? Balance?—or is it the moral sense? After all, I'm not sure but that lack is what makes her so interesting. I have been attracted a million times by passion; have I ever been attracted by sheer purity? Yes—there is one. Annabel Milbanke!"

There rose before his mind's eye a vision of the tall stateliness he had so often seen at Melbourne House. He seemed to feel again the touch of cool, ringless fingers. How infinitely different she was from others who had been more often in his fancy! She had attracted him from his first street glimpse of her—from the first day he looked into her calm virginal eyes across a dinner-table. It was her placidity—the very absence of chaos—that drew him. She represented the one type of which he was not tired. Besides, she was beautiful—not with the ripe, red, exotic beauty of Lady Caroline Lamb, or the wilder eccentric charm of Jane Clermont, but with the unalterable serenity of a rain-washed sky, a snow-bank, a perfect statue.

On his jaded mood the thought of her fell with a salving relief, like rain on a choked highway. A link-boy, throwing open the carriage door, broke his reverie.

He looked up. The bright, garish lanterns smote him with a new and alien sense of distaste. Beyond the stage-entrance and the long dim passage lay the candle-lighted greenroom, the select coterie that gossiped there,

and—Jane Clermont. In Portman Square, in the city's west end, Lady Jersey was standing by her bower of roses and somewhere in the throng about her moved a tall, spirit-looking girl with calm, lash-shaded eyes.

Gordon saw both pictures clearly as he paused, his foot on the carriage step. Then he spoke to the coachman.

"To Lady Jersey's," he said, and reëntered the carriage.

CHAPTER XI

THE BEATEN PATH

The late sun, rosying the lake beside the ruined cloister, had drawn its flame-wrought curtains across the moor that lay about Newstead, and the library was full of shadows as Gordon groped in the darkness for a candle.

Dinner was scarce through, for the party he had gathered—who for a noisy fortnight had made the gray old pile resound to the richest fooleries in the range of their invention—did not rise before noon, had scarce breakfasted by two, and voted the evening still in its prime at three o'clock in the morning. The Abbey had been theirs to turn upside down and they had given rein to every erratic audacity. That very day they had had the servants drag into the dining-room an old stone coffin from the rubbish of the tumble-down priory; had resurrected from some cobwebbed corner a set of monkish dresses with all the proper apparatus of crosses and beads with which they had opened a conventual chapter of "The Merry Monks of Newstead"; and had set Fletcher to polishing the old skull drinking-cup on whose silver mounting Gordon long ago had had engraved the stanzas he had written on the night

his mother lay dead. The grotesquerie had been hailed with enthusiasm, and the company had sat that evening gowned and girdled about the dinner-table, where Sheridan's gray poll had given him the seat of honor as abbot.

Gordon wore one of the black gabardines, as he lit the candle in the utterly confused library. It was a sullen, magnificent chamber. The oak wainscoting was black with age. Tapestries and book-shelves covered one side, and floor and tables were littered with reviews and books, carelessly flung from their place.

A shout, mingled with the prolonged howls of a wolf and the angered "woof" of a bear sounded from the driveway—the guests were amusing themselves with the beasts chained on either side of the entrance. These were relics of that old, resentful season when Gordon had hermited himself there to lash his critics with his defiant Satire. The wolf, he had then vowed, should be entered for the deanery of St. Paul's, and the bear sit for a theological fellowship at Cambridge.

For a moment, candle in hand, he listened to the mingled noises, his head on one side, a posture almost of irksomeness. He started when Sheridan's hand fell on his shoulder.

"By the Lord!" he ejaculated. "I took you for the Abbey ghost!"

Sheridan laughed, lit the cigar Gordon handed him, and sat down, tucking the ends of his rope-girdle between his great knees. The tonsure he had contrived was a world too small for his massive head, and the monk's robe showed inconsistent glimpses of red waistcoat and fawn-colored trousers where its edges gaped.

"What are you mooning over?" he asked. "Got a new poem in mind?"

"No. To-day I have thrown two into the fire to my comfort, and smoked out of my head the plan of another."

"Sentimental?"

"Not I. I was thinking of the East. I wish I might sail for Greece in the spring—provided I neither marry myself nor unmarry any one else in the interval."

"Why not the first?" the other pursued. "I tried it younger than you."

The speaker sighed presently, and locking his hands behind his head, leaned back against the cushions, his fine, rugged face under its shock of rough gray hair, turned tender. "My pretty maid of Bath!" he said softly. "Elizabeth, my girl-wife that I fought a duel for at Kingsdown and who ran away with me to France when I hadn't a pound! It's twelve years since she died. This is an anniversary to me, my boy. Forty years ago to-day she married me. I hadn't written 'The Rivals' then, nor gone to Parliament—nor grown old!"

Gordon was silent. Sheridan's face, in the candlelight, was older than he had ever seen it. Age was claiming him, though youth was still in the foppish dress, the brilliant sparkle of the eye, the sharp quickness on the tongue. But the wife he remembered at that moment had belonged to a past generation.

A muffled call came—"Sherry! Sherry!" and at the summons the gray head lifted and the gleam of incorrigible humor shot again across the thin cheeks. "The rogues are whooping for me!" he chuckled, and hurried out.

Gordon stared into the gloom of the open window opposite in a reverie. That echo of still-living memory struck across his whimsical mood with strange directness, like a voice speaking insistently of simple human needs.

"To love, to marry—" he reflected. "It is the recourse of the highest intellect as well as the lowest. There is Sheridan. He is brain at its summit. He puts more intellect into squeezing a new case of claret out of a creditor tradesman than the average man has in his whole brain-box. He has written the very best drama and delivered the very best single oration ever conceived or heard in England. And now, without his pretty wife, he is a prey to debt, to gaming and to the bailiffs! Peace and single possession, the Eden-right of man—the having and holding from all the world of one warm, human sympathy—that is the world's way, the clear result of ages of combined experience."

He looked up at a pounding of hoofs outside and a howl from the chained wolf. The sounds merged into a hilarious hubbub from the dining-room, betokening some neighborhood arrival.

His eyes, still gazing through the parted curtains, could discern dimly on the terrace a white image standing out in relief from the swathing darkness. It was a statue of Vesta, goddess of the domestic fireside. It seemed to gaze in at him with a peculiar quiet significance. To the Romans that image had stood for the hearthstone—for all the sweet, age-old conventionalities of life, such as enshrined his sister, in her placid country home, her children around her. He had a vision of a stately figure moving about the Abbey with

a watching solicitude, and there flashed into his mind the beginning of one of his poems:

> **"She walks in beauty, like the night**
> **Of cloudless climes and starry skies—"**

It sang itself over in his brain. The woman he would choose would be like that—cool, cloudless, beautiful as the night outside the open window. He knew such a woman, as flawless and as lovely—one, and one only. His thought, unweighted by purpose, had followed her since that July afternoon when she had handed him the golden guinea in exchange for his book. She was not in London now. At that moment she was in Mansfield, a sharp gallop across the Newstead moor. If he had ever had a dream of feminine perfectness, she was its embodiment. Would marriage with such a one fetter him? In the great clanging world that teased and worried him, would it not be a refuge?

A sudden recollection came to him, out of the dust of a past year—a recollection of a youth with bright eyes and tangled hair, in the Fleet Prison. There had been an hour, before success had bitten him, when he had promised himself that fame's fox-fire should not lure him, that he would cherish his song and rid his soul of the petty things that dragged it down. How had that promise been fulfilled? With poor adventure, and empty intrigue and flickering rushlight amours to which that restless something in him had driven him on, an anchorless craft in the cross-tides of passion!

"Home!" he mused. "To pursue no will-o'-the-wisp of fancy! To shut out all vagrant winds and prolong that spark of celestial fire!"

He drew a quick sibilant breath, sat down at the writing-table and wrote hastily but unerringly, a letter, clean-etched and unembellished, a simple statement and a question.

He signed it, laughing aloud as a sense of wild incongruity gushed over him. Through the heavy oaken doors he could hear mingled laughter and uproar. A stentorian bass was rumbling a drinking-song.

What a challenging antithesis! Lava and snow—erratic comet and chaste moon—jungle passions and the calm of a northern landscape! A proposal of marriage written at such a time and place, with a drinking-stave shouted in the next room! And what would be her answer?

The daring grew brighter in his eye. He sealed the letter with a coin from his waistcoat pocket, sprang up and jerked the bell-rope. The footman entered.

"Rushton, have Selim saddled at once and take this note to Mansfield. Ride like the devil. Do you hear?"

"Yes, my lord." The boy looked at the superscription, put the note in his pocket and was gone.

Gordon laughed again—a burst of gusty excitement—and seized the full ink-well into which he had dipped his pen. "It shall serve no lesser purpose!" he exclaimed, and hurled it straight through the open window.

Then he threw open the door and walked hastily toward the hilarity of the great dining-room.

CHAPTER XII

"MAN'S LOVE IS OF MAN'S LIFE A THING APART"

What he saw as he emerged from the hall was Saturnalia indeed.

Sheridan, his robe thrown open from his capacious frame, sat with knees wide apart, his chair tilted back, his face crumpling with amusement. Hobhouse sat cross-legged on the stone coffin. Others, robed and tonsured, were grouped about the board, and on it was perched a stooped and ungainly figure in a somber dress of semi-clerical severity.

"Sunburn me, it's Dr. Cassidy," muttered Gordon, with a grim smile. "And without his tracts! What's he doing at Newstead? The rascals—they've got him fuddled!"

The hospitality offered in the host's absence had in truth proved too much for the doctor. Now, as he balanced on his gaitered feet among the overturned wine-bottles, he looked a very unclerical figure indeed. His neck-cloth was awry, and his flattish eyes had a look of comical earnestness and unaccustomed good-fellowship. He held a wine-glass and waved it in uncertain gestures, his discourse punctured by frequent and unstinted applause:

"What was the Tree of Knowledge doing in the garden, you ask. Why not planted on the other side of the wall? Human reason, enlightened by inspiration, finds no answer in the divine Word. Theology is our only refuge. Adam was predestined to sin. All created things are contingent on omnipotent volition. Sin being predestined, the process leading to that sin must be predestined, too. See? Sin—Adam. Garden—snake. The law of the divine Will accomplished."

Hobhouse wiped his eyes with his handkerchief. "Who could contemplate the picture," he groaned, "without tears? Poor fallen man! I weep for him."

The remark struck the lecturer with pathos. The look of stern satisfaction with which he had so eloquently justified the eternal tragedy melted into a compassionate expression which had a soft tinge of the romantic. He smiled—a smile of mingled burgundy and benevolence.

"Herein, gentlemen, appears our lesson of infinite pity. Man expelled from Eden, but still possessing Eve. Justice tempered with mercy. Love of woman compensating for the loss of earthly Paradise."

"True, true," murmured Hobhouse. "'There's heaven on earth in woman's love,' as Mr. Moore, here, sings. A prime subject for another toast, Doctor. We've drunk to the navy and to theology; now for a glass to her eternal ladyship!—Egad! Here's Gordon!"

The final word brought a shout, and the glasses were refilled. "Gordon's toast!" they insisted as they opened ranks. "A toast, or a new poem!"

Some disturbance out of doors had roused the ani-

mals kennelled at the hall entrance and a battery of growls mingled with the importunities.

Sheridan pounded with his great fist on the jingling board till the uproar stilled. "The lord of the manor speaks!" he proclaimed.

Gordon approached the table and picked up the skull-cup. In the blaze of candle-light, his face showed markedly its singular and magnetic beauty. He glanced about him an instant—at Sheridan's waggish, rough-hewn countenance, at the circle of younger flushed and uproarious ones, and at the labored solemnity and surprise of the central figure on the table. The doctor's answering stare was full of a fresh bewilderment; he was struggling to recall a message he had brought to some one—he had forgotten to whom—which in the last half-hour had slipped like oil from his mind.

In Gordon's brain verses yet unwritten had been grouping themselves that afternoon—verses that not for long were to be set in type—and he spoke them now; not flippantly, but with a note of earnestness and of feeling, a light flush in his cheek tingeing the colorless white of his face, and his gray-blue eyes darkened to violet.

"Woman! though framed in weakness, ever yet
  Her heart reigns mistress of man's varied mind.
And she will follow where that heart is set
  As roll the waves before the settled wind.
Her soul is feminine nor can forget—
  To all except love's image, fondly blind.
And she can e'en survive love's fading dim,
And bear with life, to love and pray for him!"

It was an odd thing to see this compelling figure, standing in the midst of these monkish roisterers, all in celibate robes and beads, declaiming lines of such passionate beauty and in a voice flexible and appealing. An odd toast to drink from such a goblet!

"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence; man may range
The court, camp, church, the vessel and the mart,
Sword, gown, gain, glory offer in exchange.
Pride and ambition may o'errun his heart,
And few there are whom these can not estrange.
Woman knows but one refuge, if love err—
To draw him from these baubles, back to her!"

There was an instant of dead silence when he paused, broken by the doctor's hiccough and a voice behind them.

Sheridan saw Gordon set down the skull-cup as the spot of color faded from his cheek. He turned to the entrance.

"Curse catch me!" gasped the wit, springing to his feet. "Lady Melbourne and Miss Milbanke!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE SMIRCHED IMAGE

All turned astonished faces. Just inside the oaken door swung wide open to the night, stood her ladyship, her features expressing a sense of humor struggling with dignity, and just behind her, with a look of blent puzzle and surprise, her stately niece, Annabel Milbanke. Mrs. Muhl, Gordon's withered fire-lighter, was hovering in the rear.

It was a tense moment. Gordon's glance swept Annabel's face—distinguished a letter still unopened in her hand—as he came forward to greet them. A dull red was climbing over Cassidy's sobering face, and with something between a gulp and a groan he got down heavily from his commanding position.

It was Lady Melbourne who broke the pause:

"I fear we intrude. We were driving across to Annesley where there is a ball to-night, and felt tempted to take your lordship with us. We had not known of your guests. Dr. Cassidy rode ahead to apprise you of our call."

The doctor was mopping his mottled brow. He was far too miserable to reply.

"I fear our hospitality outran our discretion," ven-

tured Gordon. "The doctor perhaps forgot to mention it."

Lady Melbourne's quick gaze overran the scene and lingered on the crosses and the monkish robes with a slow-dawning smile.

Sheridan made a dramatic gesture. "Lo, the first poet of his age in the depths of one of his abandoned debauches!" He pointed to Mrs. Muhl who stood in the background, her wrinkled countenance as brown as a dry toast—"Behold the troop of Paphian damsels, as pictured in the *Morning Post!* Evasion is no longer possible."

"I see. And you, Doctor?"

"The doctor," said Moore, maintaining his gravity, "had just read us his latest tract."

"I regret we missed it." She turned to Gordon. "We will not linger. Good night, gentlemen. No,"—as Gordon protested—"our carriage and escort are waiting."

"My dear Lady Melbourne," interposed Sheridan, "the entire chapter shall escort you. As abbot, I claim my right,"—and he offered her his arm. Gordon followed with her niece.

Annabel's hand fluttered on his sleeve. "We heard your toast," she said. "I did not dream it of you."

On the threshold a tide of rich light met them. The moon had risen and was lifting above the moor beyond a belt of distant beechwood, bathing the golden flanks of the hills, flooding the long lake with soft yellow luster and turning the gray ruins of the priory to dull silver. Lady Melbourne led the way out on to the mole of the drained moat with a cry of delight: "What a

perfect lilac night! It is like Venice. All it lacks is a gondola and music."

Gordon and Annabel had lingered at the turn of the parapet. He put out his hand and touched the letter she held with his forefinger. "You have not opened it."

"No. Your footman met us coming in the lodge gate."

"Read it."

She looked at him a moment hesitatingly. For a long time she had not been ignorant of her interest in George Gordon. She admired him also, as every woman admires talent and achievement, and the excess of worship which the world gave him fed her pride in the special measure of his regard. She saw something new in his look to-night—something more genuine, yet illusive.

"Read it," he repeated.

She broke the seal and held the written page to the moonlight. As she read, a soft mellow note arose. It was Hobhouse's violoncello, playing an aria of Rossini's —a haunting melody that matched the night. The notes were still throbbing when her eyes lifted.

Gordon had taken a golden guinea from his pocket; he leaned forward and laid it on the letter's waxen seal. It fitted the impression.

"It was a gift," he said. "It is the one you gave me that day at the book-shop."

She felt a sudden tremor of heart—or of nerves.

"Oh," she exclaimed, thrilled for a brief moment; "and you kept it?"

At that instant a figure approached them across the terrace, doffing his cap awkwardly. It was the under-

gardener, bringing a trinket he had found that afternoon among the lily-bulbs.

Gordon looked at the plain gold circlet he handed him. He turned to Annabel with a strange expression as the man disappeared.

"It is my mother's wedding-ring," he said in a low voice. "It was lost when I was a child."

"How very odd," she commented, "to find it—today!"

The music had ceased, and Lady Melbourne and her tonsured attendants were coming toward them.

Annabel's hand rested on the stone railing and Gordon took it, looking full into her eyes.

"Shall I put it on?" he asked.

She looked from the ring to his face—her cool fingers trembling in his.

"Yes," she answered, and he slipped it on her finger.

The noise of the departing carriage-wheels had scarce died away when Sheridan entered the library, whither Gordon had preceded him. He was tittering inordinately.

"I've been trying to find Cassidy," he said, "but he's gone. Went and got his horse while Hobhouse was fiddling. Poor doctor! If he'd only been a parson!"

"Look, look!" cried Gordon. He was pointing to the window.

Sheridan stared. The unwavering moonlight fell on the image of Vesta—no longer marble-white. The inkwell Gordon had hurled through the window had struck full on its brows, and the clear features and raiment were blackened and befouled with a sinister stain!

CHAPTER XIV

WHAT CAME OF THE TREACLE-MOON

"The treacle-moon is over. I am awake and find myself married."

Gordon read the lines in the diary he held, by the fading daylight. He sat in the primrosed garden of his town house on Piccadilly Terrace, beside a wicker tea-table. The day was at its amber hour. The curtains of the open windows behind him waved lazily in the breeze and the fragrance of hawthorn clung like a caress across the twilight. What he read had been the last entry in the book.

He smiled grimly, remembering the night he had written it. It was at Seaham, the home of his wife's girlhood, the final day of their stay—the end of that savorless month of sameness and stagnation, of eating fruit and sauntering, playing dull games at cards, yawning, reading old Annual Registers and the daily papers, listening to the monologue that his elderly father-in-law called conversation, and watching the growth of stunted gooseberry bushes—the month in which he had eaten of the bitter fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Today he recalled the trenchant features of that visit distinctly: the prim, austere figure of Lady Noël, his

wife's mother, presiding at the table; Sir Ralph opposite, mumbling for the third time, over a little huddle of decanters which could neither interrupt nor fall asleep, the speech he had made at a recent tax-meeting; his own wife with eyes that so seldom warmed to his, but grew keener each day to glance cold disapproval; and Mrs. Clermont, Lady Noël's companion and confidante, black-gowned, bloodless, with noiseless gliding step and observant gaze—Jane Clermont's aunt, as he had incidentally learned.

"The treacle-moon is over!" And that satiric comment had been penned almost a year ago!

Gordon moved his shoulders with a quick gesture, as though dismissing an unpleasant reflection, and took from his pocket a little black phial. He measured out a minute quantity of the dark liquid into a glass and poured it full of water. He drank the dull, cloudy mixture at a draft.

"How strange that mind should need this!" he said to himself. "My brain is full of images—rare, beautiful, dreamlike—but they are meaningless, incoherent, unattached. A few drops of this elixir and they coalesce, crystallize, transform themselves—and I have a poem. I have only to write it down. I wrote 'Lara' in three evenings, while I was undressing from the opera. It shan't master me as it has De Quincey, either. Why, all my life I have denied myself even meat. My soul shall not be the slave of any appetite!"

He smiled whimsically as he set down the glass: "What nonsense it is to talk of soul," he muttered, "when a cloud makes it melancholy, and wine makes it mad!"

He paused, listening intently. A low sound, an infant's cry, had caught his ear. His eyes grew darker violet. His look changed.

"Ada! Ada!" he said in a whisper.

In his voice was a singular vibrant accent—intense, eager, yet the words had the quality of a sacrament and a consecration.

He rose, thrust the diary into his pocket and went into the house, ascending the stair to a small room at the end of the hall. The door was ajar and a dim light showed within. He listened, then pushed the door wider and entered. A white nursery bed stood in one corner, and Gordon noiselessly placed a chair beside it and sat down, his elbow on his knee and his chin in his hand, looking at the little face against the pillow, the tiny fist lying on the coverlid.

Gazing, his deeply carved lips moulded softly, a sense of the overwhelming miracle of life possessed him. This small fabric was woven of his own flesh. He saw his own curving mouth, his full chin, his brow! Some day those hands would cling to his, those lips would frame the word "father." What of life's pitfalls, of its tragedies, awaited this new being he had brought into the world?

He sighed, and as if in answer, the baby sighed too. The sound smote him strangely. Was there some occult sympathy between them? Her birthright was not only of flesh, but of spirit. Had she also share in his isolated heart, his wayward impulses, his passionate pride?

At length he took out the diary and opening it on his

"ADA! MY ONE SWEET DAUGHTER!" *p. 103.*

knee, began to write—lines whose feeling swelled from some great wave of tenderness:

"Ada! my one sweet daughter! if a name
  Dearer and purer were, it should be thine.
Whate'er of earth divide us I shall claim
  Not tears, but tenderness to answer mine:
Go where I will, to me thou art the same—
  A loved regret which I would not resign.
There are but two things in my destiny,—
A world to roam through, and a home with thee.

I can reduce all feelings but this one;
  And that I would not;—for at length I see
Such scenes as those wherein my life begun.
  The earliest—even the only paths for me—
Had I but sooner learned the crown to shun,
  I had been better than I now can be;
The passions which have torn me would have died;
I had not suffered, and thou hadst not sighed.

I feel almost at times as I have felt
  In happy childhood; trees, and flowers and brooks
Which do remember me of where I dwelt
  Ere my young mind was sacrificed to books,
Come as of yore upon me, and can melt
  My heart with recognition of their looks;
Till even at moments I have thought to see
Some living thing to love—but none like thee.

With false ambition what had I to do?
  Little with love, and least of all with fame.
And yet they came unsought, and with me grew,
  And made me all which they can make—a name.
Yet this was not the end I did pursue;
  Surely I once beheld a nobler aim.
Yet if thou help me find it—even so
Shall I be glad that I have purchased woe!"

The door of the room adjoining opened and a figure dressed in white appeared. He rose and passed through.

"You wished me, Annabel?"

"I do not wish Ada disturbed. As you know, I am starting with her to Seaham to-morrow, and she needs the rest."

"I was very quiet," he said almost apologetically, and a little wearily.

Her critical eye had wandered to the book and pencil in his hand. The look was cold—glacially so—and disapproving, as she asked with quiet point:

"My lord, when do you intend to give up your tiresome habit of versifying?"

He stared at her. In all her lack of understanding, she had at least spared him this. Yet this was really what she thought! At heart she despised him for the only thing that to him made life endurable. She took no pride in his poetry, wished him a man like others of her circle—a dull, church-going, speech-reading, tea-drinking, partridge-hunting clod! A flush blurred his vision.

"Surely," a thin edge of contempt cutting in her words, "you do not intend always to do only this? You are a peer, you have a seat in the Lords. You might be anything you choose."

"But if I am—what I choose?" he said difficultly.

A chill anger lay behind her constrained manner. Her lips were pressed tight together. During the whole time of their marriage he had never seen her display more feeling than in that brief moment on the terrace at Newstead when he had put his mother's ring upon her finger. For a long time he had watched for

some sign—each day feeling his heart, so savage of vitality, contract and harden under that colorless restraint—till he had come to realize that the untroubled gentleness was only passivity, the calm strength but complacency as cold as the golden guinea he had treasured, that the flower he had chosen for its white fragrance was a sculptured altar-lily. Now her mind seemed jolted from its conventional groove. The fact was that the constant flings of his enemies, which he noted with sovereign contempt, had pierced her deeply, wounding that love of the world's opinion so big in her. And a venomous review which her mother had brought her that day had mingled its abuse with a strain of pity for her, and pity she could not bear.

"Why do you not choose to live like other men?" she broke out. "There is something so selfish, so unnatural in your engrossed silences, your changeable moods, your disregard of ordinary customs. You believe nothing that other men believe."

His face had grown weirdly white. The sudden outburst had startled him. He was struggling with resentment.

"Cassidy's doctrinal tracts, for instance?" The query had a tinge of sarcasm.

She bit her lips. "You have no idea of reverence for anything. I might have guessed it that night at Newstead and how you treated him! You speak your views on religion—views that I hate—openly, anywhere. You write and print them, too, in your verse!"

"You are frank," he said; "let me be the same. What my brain conceives my hand shall write. If I valued fame, I should flatter received opinions. That I have

never done! I cannot and will not give the lie to my doubts, come what may."

"What right have you to have those doubts?" Her anger was rising full-fledged, and bitter-winged with malice. "Why do you set yourself against all that is best? What do you believe in that is good, I should like to know?"

"I abhor books of religion," he responded steadily, "and the blasphemous notions of sectaries. I have no belief in their absurd heresies and Thirty-nine Articles. I feel joy in all beautiful and sublime things. But I hate convention and cant and lay-figure virtue, and shall go on hating them to the end of the chapter."

"To the end of the chapter!" she echoed. "You mean to do nothing more—to think of nothing but scribbling pretty lines on paper and making a mystery of yourself! What is our life to be together? What did you marry me for?"

"Bella!" The word was almost a cry. "I married you for faith, not for creeds! I am as I have always been—I have concealed nothing. I married you for sympathy and understanding! I know I am not like other men—but I tried to make you love and understand me!—I *tried!* Why did you marry *me?*"

For an instant the real pain in the appeal seemed to cleave through her icy demeanor and she made an involuntary movement. But as she hesitated, Fletcher knocked at the door:

"Mr. Sheridan, my lord, come to take you to Drury Lane."

The words congealed the softer feeling. As the valet withdrew, she turned upon her husband.

"Sheridan! and Drury Lane! That is the kind of company you prefer to keep! A doddering old man who falls asleep over his negus in White's bow-window, coming and going here at all hours, and littering the library with his palsied snuff-taking."

A doddering old man! It was true. The soul of White's and Brookes', the first table wit and *vivant* of the kingdom, the companion of a royal prince—he, "Sherry," who all his life had never known ache or pain, not even the gout, who had out-dandied and out-bumpered the youngest of them—had lived beyond his time. The welcome of the gay world had dwindled to a grudging patronage. Gordon had more than once of late come between him and a low sponging-house or the debtors' prison. Yet at his wife's tone, a gleam of anger shot into his eyes—anger that made them steely-blue as sword blades.

"Sheridan was my friend," he said. "My friend from the first, when others snarled. He is old now—old and failing—but he is still my friend. Is a man to pay no regard to loyalty or friendship?"

"He should have regard first to his own reputation. Do *you?* Even Brummell and Petersham and your choice fops of the Cocoa-Tree tavern and the Drury Lane committee have some thought for the world's opinion. But you have none. You care nothing for what it thinks of you or of your morality."

"Morality!" he repeated slowly. "I never heard the word before from anybody who was not a rascal that used it for a purpose!"

"Why will you sit silent," she continued, "and hear

yourself defamed everywhere without a word? Why will you not defend yourself?"

He shrugged his shoulders, the flash of indignation past. She had touched the point of least response. The shrug angered her even more than his satiric reply:

"What man can bear refutation?"

"You seem to think it beneath your dignity to deny slander," she went on. "You always did. I thought it would be different after we were married. But it has grown worse. The papers print more and more horrible things of you, and you do not care—either for yourself or for me!"

He gazed at her with a curious intentness.

"Surely you pay no heed to such irresponsible tales?"

"If they were all! Do you suppose I do not hear what people say besides? They do not spare my ears! Do you think I do not know the stories—what they used to say of your bachelor affairs—with Lady Oxford, and Lady Frances Wedderburn Webster—and Caro Lamb?"

"Is there none more recent?" A bitter smile had appeared, called by the veiled insinuation in her tone.

Another name flew to her tongue, for malicious rumor had credited him with a footlight amour. "Yes—Jane Clermont!"

A frown of incredulity and annoy hung blackly on his brow an instant. Had this baseless gratuitous fling gone beyond the circle of Drury Lane gossipers? Had it even reached his wife's ears? Aloud he said:

"Really, I can scarcely hold myself responsible for silly chatterers who are determined to Rochefoucauld my motives. I seem to be fast becoming the moral Æsop of the community. I am judged by what I pre-

sume Dr. Cassidy would call a dramatic Calvinism—predestined damnation without a sinner's own fault."

Her control was gone. She could not trust herself to speak further and turned away. He waited a moment in the doorway, but she did not move, and with an even "good night" he left her.

At the foot of the stair, during Gordon's painful interview, a black-gowned woman had noiselessly bent over the hall table. A letter, arrived by the post, had been laid there by Fletcher for his master. She lifted it and examined it closely. The address was written in a peculiar, twirly handwriting, on blue-tinted paper that bore in each corner the device of a cockle-shell. She listened, then passed with it into the library.

The room was unlighted, but a spring fire flickered on the hearth. She caught up a paper-knife and crouching by the hearth held its thin blade in the flame. When the metal was warmed, she softened the edges of the seal and with deftness that betrayed long practice, split it off without its breaking, opened the note and read it. Her basilisk eyes lighted with satisfaction—the triumph of a long quest rewarded. Then she warmed the wax again, replaced it, and as it hardened, broke it across as if the letter had been opened in the ordinary manner.

As Mrs. Clermont rose to her feet, a thin, severe figure stood on the threshold. She saw with relief that it was Lady Noël, and handed her the letter with a feline smile.

"Perhaps your ladyship will know if this should

be preserved," she said. "I found it just now on the floor."

Lady Noël's eyes glittered at sight of the cockle-shells. She read it hastily by the firelight. Her look was coldly yet triumphantly malignant as she leaned forward.

"Put an outer wrapper on this," she ordered in an undertone, "seal it, and take it at once to Melbourne House. Give it into William Lamb's hands—to no one else. Do you understand?"

"Yes, my lady," the other replied, and left her noiselessly, as Gordon came slowly down the stair.

"I have left your lordship this evening's *Courier*," said Lady Noël, forbiddingly.

"Thank you," he answered and looked at it carelessly. On its exposed page a pencil had marked an article of considerable length whose title was: "The Poetical Works of a Peer of the Realm, viewed in connection with Christianity and the Obligations of Social Life."

Its final paragraph was underscored with meaning heaviness:

"We have less remorse in quoting the noble lord,"—he read—"for, by this time, we believe the whole world is inclined to admit that he can pay no compliment so valuable as his censure, nor offer any insult so intolerable as his praise. *Crede Gordon* is the noble lord's armorial motto: 'Trust Gordon' is the translation in the Red-Book. We cannot but admire the ingenuity with which his lordship has converted the good faith of his ancestors into a sarcasm on his own duplicity."

A simmer of rage rose in Gordon's throat. He tore the paper twice across, flung it down, and passed on to

the drawing-room. Seeing no one, he rang for the valet.

"Where is Mr. Sheridan?" he demanded.

Fletcher was carrying a wine-glass and seemed surprised at the query.

"He was here five minutes ago, your lordship. Mr. Sheridan looked very bad when I let him in, sir. I was just getting him this brandy."

"I suppose he tired of waiting," thought Gordon. "The Clermont has a new part to-night, and Sherry's bound for Fops' Alley."

As he buttoned his great-coat, he heard a cry from the valet, and ran into the drawing-room to find Fletcher bending over the form of the old wit, prostrate on the floor, moveless, speechless, his face swept by a bluish pallor.

"Good God!" cried Gordon. "Help me lift him and fetch a doctor at once!"

With Fletcher's aid the old man was placed upon a sofa, and Gordon loosed the stiff neckerchief, put a cushion under the recumbent head and chafed the sick man's hands.

The physician looked grave when he came.

"A paralytic stroke," he said. "He must be taken home."

CHAPTER XV

THE PITFALL

It was later evening. Gordon sat in the library, the diary in which he had written those lines to Ada open before him.

Since the scene with Annabel whose dark aftermath had been the illness of his old friend, a deeper sense of pain had oppressed him. His marriage had sprung from an inarticulate divining of the infinite need of his nature for such a spiritual influence as he had imagined she possessed. It had ended in failure. A mood of hopelessness was upon him now as he wrote:

"Man is a battle-ground between angel and devil. Tenderness and roughness—sentiment, sensuality—soaring and grovelling, dirt and deity—all mixed in one compound of inspired clay. Marriage is the hostage he gives to his better nature. What if this hostage conspire with his evil side to betray the citadel?

"Nature made me passionate of temper but with an innate tendency to the love of good in my mainspring of mind. I am an atom jarring between these great discords. Sympathy is the divine lifter—the supreme harmonizer. And shall that evade me forever? Where shall I find it? In the cheap intrigue that absorbs half

the life of those around me? Shall I turn to the fairest of those blandishments, and, like the drunkard, forget my penury in the hiccough and happiness of intoxication?"

The thought of the delicate coquetry of Jane Clermont and of the ripe beauty of Lady Caroline Lamb flashed across the page, an insistent vision. He saw the latter's eyes, eager and inviting, as he had so often seen them at Melbourne House, when he had turned from them to a paler beauty. He thought of a past season when the whirlwind of her infatuation had wound their two names in gossip that had never tired. Love with her would have counted all sacrifice cheap, all obstacles gossamer. Could such a passion yield him what he craved? Was he bound to live pent within the palisade a priest's ceremony had reared about him? Of what virtue were honor and faith to a bond where love was not?

But this picture faded as he wrote across it the answer to its question:

"No! I will not. I will keep the bond. Yet I and the mother of my child are far apart as the two poles! I am a toy of inborn unbeliefs, linked to unemotional goodness, merciless virtue and ice-girdled piety. I am asked to bow down to arcana which to me are bagatelles. As well believe in Roberts the Prophet, or Breslau the Conjurer if he had lived in the reign of Tiberius! The everlasting *why* which stares me in the face is an unforgivable thing. Yet to yield—to go the broad, easy way of conventional belief and smug morality—to shackle the doubts I feel! To anchor myself to the frozen molehills and write, like other men, glozed comfortable lines

on which friend and foe can batten alike, and with which reviewer and reviewee, rhinoceros and elephant, mammoth and megalonyx can lie quietly together!"

He threw down his pen, and leaned his forehead in his hands.

"Would to God I had nothing better in this soul of mine!" he exclaimed. "The rest of the world can game and kiss and besot themselves in peace. Only I—I—must writhe and struggle unsatisfied!"

"There is a carboy outside, your lordship, who wishes to see you."

"A carboy!" Gordon raised his head. "What does he want?"

"He says he has a message for your lordship's own hands. He's a likely-looking lad."

"Very well, show him in. Hasn't Rushton returned from Mr. Sheridan's yet?" he added.

"Yes, my lord. But Lady Noël sent him out again with a letter for Sir Ralph to his club."

Gordon heaved a sigh of relief. "Sherry must be better," he thought. He waited on the threshold till Fletcher ushered in a slim figure in the round coat and buttons of a carman. His chin was muffled in a coarse neckerchief, and a rumpled mass of brown hair showed beneath the edges of the cloth cap whose visor was pulled over his eyes.

"Well, my lad?"

The boy stood still, twisting his fingers in his jacket till the valet had retired. Then suddenly as the door closed, the cap was snatched off, a mass of brown hair dropped curling about the boyish shoulders—the silver-buttoned jacket fell open, revealing a softly rounded

throat and delicate slope of breast. Gordon uttered an astonished and bewildered exclamation:

"Caro! What mad masquerade is this?"

She drew back under the pale intensity, the controlled agitation of his face. "Forgive me! forgive me!" Tumult was looking from her eyes, and her shoulders were heaving. "I could not help it! I have tried to forget you during all this past year. I cannot bear to see you only at Melbourne House and at parties and on the street. How pale you always are!" she went on. "Like a statue of marble, and your dark hair such a contrast. I never see you without wanting to cry. If any painter could paint me your face as it is, I would give anything I possess!"

She had touched his hand, but he drew it away sharply, feeling a black sense of entanglement in the touch.

"Lady Caroline! This is unthinkable! To come here in that dress—here, to this house, is sheer madness! I did not imagine you capable of such folly."

"You think I am weak and selfish," she pleaded. "You have always thought I did not struggle to withstand my feelings. But indeed, indeed, it is more than human nature can bear! I loved you before you married Bella—loved you better than name, than religion, than any prospects on earth! You must have loved me more if you had never seen her! She has never cared for you as I do."

He darted a glance at the door. His wife! A rebellious anger rose in him at being thrust into such a predicament.

"You have taken a strange way to show that love."

"Oh, I could show it other ways!" She was looking at him with tremulous daring. "They used to say that once in the East, to prove to a Greek girl that you loved her, you wounded yourself in the breast. Would such a thing make you believe how I love you?"

At that moment both heard a voice in the hallway.

"Bella!" he said in a whisper.

"Oh, I thought she had gone to Seaham," she breathed. "You must believe I did not know she was here!" She buttoned the coat over her breast with nervous fingers and put on the cloth cap. The sound had thrown her into a paroxysm of dread.

"Quick, quick!" she urged.

"Not that way. Here, to the garden entrance!" He caught her hand, drew her sharply toward the rear door and opened it.

The retreat was closed. Lady Noël, with sparkling eyes and spare figure leaning on her cane, faced them at the threshold, her gaze leaping with flickering triumph. At the same instant Annabel entered by the other door.

The trap had sprung, the joints were working with precision. Gordon's first glance at his wife's face told him there had been betrayal, for the look he saw was not of surprise or wonder, though its indignant lines set themselves deeper in presence of the visible fact. The jaws of this trap had not been set by accident. How had Lady Noël and Annabel guessed? The latter's eyes were on the carboy's costume, as if she would convince herself doubly by every evidence of her senses. The grim figure on the threshold pointed one thin forefinger at the shrinking form in the boy's dress.

"Take off that cap!"

Annabel took a quick step forward, as Lady Caroline snatched off the covering to show a face flaming with defiance. "Caro!" she exclaimed—"Caro!"

As she looked from one to the other, contempt rose in a frigid wave over her features and she drew herself up to her full height and stood stonily erect.

Lady Noël laughed with an echoing amusement, as Lady Caroline burst out in a torrent:

"You can hate and despise me if you want to, Bella. It can make no difference to me. Why did you come between us in the first place? *You* never loved him, at least. You had nothing to give him but that horrible virtuous indifference of yours—nothing! nothing! You have nothing to give him now. You have made his life wretched with your perfectness and your conventions! Everybody knows that!"

Annabel's look swept her with its sharp edge of scorn; then flashed on Gordon, who stood composed, motionless, in a grip of repression.

"Is it not enough for you to have made me the butt of your daily caprice, your shameless atheism?"—she drove the words at her husband—"for all London to gossip of your social 'conquests' and your dissolute affairs? Is *this* not enough—that you offer me the final dishonor of such planned meetings, under this roof?"

"It was not his fault!" cried Lady Caroline. "Bella! I will tell you the truth!"

Gordon put out his hand with a gesture of protest as Lady Noël laughed again, musically, maliciously.

A knock at the door silenced all voices. It heralded

Fletcher, whose eyes, habitually discreet, seemed to see no further than his master.

"Mr. Somers is outside, sir, with the Melbourne coach, to wait for Lady Caroline Lamb."

Lady Caroline's blank, terror-struck eyes turned to Gordon, and she began to tremble. She ran and pulled aside the portière from the window. She shrank back with a gasping cry, for she recognized the coach drawn up at the curb, whose lighted lanterns, reflected from fawn-covered panels emblazoned with the Melbourne arms, lit plainly the figure of William Lamb's confidential factotum waiting by its step. Her husband had known she was coming there! He had sent Somers instead of the coachman—he even knew of the carboy's dress!

A slow change passed over her face. Fear and dread had shown there an instant pallidly—dread of the malignant fury she knew lay couched beneath the cold exterior of her husband; now these were swallowed up in a look more burning, more intense, more terrible—a look of sudden, savage certainty. She turned this new countenance upon Gordon.

"So!" she said in a stifled voice. "You sent my letter to my husband! You did not count on a scene with Bella—but for me who have bored you, you took this cruel way to end it all! Well, you have succeeded. Now I know Madame de Staël was right when she called you 'demon.' You are without a heart. How I have loved you—and now I hate you. I *hate* you!"

He made no reply. Her letter? As she spoke he had had a vision of Mrs. Clermont's noiseless movements and thin secret mouth, and suspicion clogged his tongue.

Lady Caroline looked at him an instant with a shudder as she passed out. "I shall always hate you," she said with vengeful emphasis. They heard the outer door close heavily behind her and the dulled sound of wheels.

As Gordon turned again to meet his wife's flinty gaze, the footman appeared.

"Sir Ralph wished me to say he would answer at once, your ladyship," he said to Lady Noël.

"There was no change in Mr. Sheridan's condition, Rushton?" asked Gordon.

"Change, my lord?" the boy stammered. "Why, I—" He looked from him to the others, his jaw dropped.

Lady Noël shifted her cane. "*I* received Rushton's report. I thought it a pity anything should interfere with your lordship's evening engagement."

"Mr. Sheridan was thought to be dying, my lord," said the boy, "and had asked for you."

CHAPTER XVI

THE DESPOILING

As his hackney-coach sped through the night, Gordon's anger at the inhumanity that had kept from him the sick man's message, faded gradually into a duller resentment that held most of grief.

The words of his wife recurred to his mind: "A doddering old man!" She had seen only the uncertain walk, the trembling hand, the dying down of the brilliance and fire into crumbling ashes. Not the past, the career in Parliament, the masterly craft of the playwright, the years of loyalty to his friends. Social morality had been a lifelong jest to Sheridan—a veritable "School for Scandal" from which he drew his choicest *bon-mots,* yet his whole character had been sweetened with the milk of human kindness. Annabel walked a moral princess of parallelograms, viciously virtuous, mercilessly inflexible. "And the greatest of these is charity"—whose was it? Annabel's or Sheridan's?

On the steps of St. Dunstan's-in-the-West stood Dr. Cassidy with his friend, the under-curate, and he caught a glimpse of the coach that whirled by.

"Yonder," said Cassidy, "rides London's poet-apos-

tate, known by his limp and his profligacy. The devotees are tiring. How long can the idol stand?"

The other turned to gaze. "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!" he quoted, "for so did their fathers to the false prophets!" He also was a sanctimonious young man.

The house that sheltered the old wit was dark as Gordon ascended the steps, and the hollow echoes from the knocker, reverberating through the hall, chilled him with dread. "He died an hour ago, your lordship," the servant said.

An hour! And but for the delay, he would have been in time! As Gordon entered, a prey to this reflection, a thick-set man dressed shabbily, ascended the steps. He had once been the dead man's groom, he explained, and begged awkwardly to be allowed to look upon his face. The servant hesitated, but at the grief in the stranger's voice, he let him in, and the new-comer pushed quickly past Gordon and entered the darkened bedroom before him.

There his profound emotion vanished. He drew a bailiff's wand from beneath his coat and touching the rigid figure that lay there, proclaimed with gruff triumph: "I arrest this body in the king's name, for five hundred pounds."

The exultant bailiff started at the touch of fingers gripping his wrist. Something in Gordon's face, though now distorted with feeling, was familiar.

"Why," he said, "I'm a turnkey, if you ain't the gent that took the young ladies into the Fleet!"

"Come with me," rasped Gordon between his teeth, and the bailiff followed. In the next room he drew from

his pocket a draft from John Murray, his publisher, for four hundred and eighty guineas. Without a word he indorsed this and handed it to the bailiff, who scrutinized it and counted out the four pounds change.

"Now go!" said Gordon.

The clock of St. Paul's was pealing the hour of eleven as the hackney-coach drove back to the house on Piccadilly Terrace. A light low-lying mist softened the outlines of the alley-ways and purified the filth of the street. Overhead, it frayed into a night of wonderful starshine, where, beyond the soiled sordidness of the clamorous city, the sky spread a web of diamonds and sifted gold dust.

While the wheels rattled onward, Gordon's white whimsical face, lifted to those presences above the smoky roofs, gradually lost its bitter glaze and expressed a curious wistfulness—a vague, appealing weariness and speculation.

"Matter is eternal," he reflected, "always changing, but reproduced and eternal. May not mind be also? Is its inner spark celestial? Or, like the cells that produce it, is it a creature of the mold, doomed to extinction with the brain, sinking as the candle-flame perishes when the wick falls? I remember when I viewed the planets through Herschel's telescope and saw all at once that they were worlds. What has eternity to do with the congregated cosmic dust we call mankind? What are our little passions and resentments before the least of those stars?"

His gaze and his thought fell from the sky.

Had he any right to the stubborn pride which would

not bemean itself by self-defense? Would his own silence not abet the calculating hatred of Lady Noël's and add to that monstrous estrangement that was steadily carrying his soul further and further from the soul of Annabel? The question of whether his wife believed or disbelieved aside, was he justified in such a course now? A softer feeling took possession of him. Appearances had been against him. To speak could make the matter no worse for Lady Caroline. He would go to Annabel and assure her of the truth. Perhaps even out of such a catastrophe as to-night's might arise a truer and a nearer confidence.

He threw off his great-coat in the empty hall and ascended the stair. The door of the chamber where sat the little white bed was open. He went in. The lamp still shed its radiance on the pillow, but the tiny fragrant mould where a baby head had lain, now held only a note, bearing Gordon's name.

With a puzzled look he tore it open.

A white anguish spread over his features. A cry broke from his lips. He flung wide the door of his wife's room—it was empty. He ran down the stair, where the footman met him, turning a wondering face to his question.

"My lady went out with Lady Noël, my lord," Rushton answered, "and took the baby with her. Sir Ralph came for them a half-hour ago. Here is a letter he left for your lordship."

Gordon took it mechanically and read the few curt lines that burned into his sight like points of pain. It was the end, then! Annabel had gone, not to return—gone with only a hastily pencilled note for farewell,

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dress, penned in the first hour of his bereavement, and offered to the public ostensibly by his own hand. Publicity would be just the note to make the whole strain ring false. It would recoil upon him in open disapproval and contempt! It would rouse new voices in the clarion-tongued clamor of abuse that her jubilant ear had heard swelling through the past year—forge a new link in the chain that would bind him to disgrace, the disgrace she believed he had had share in heaping upon her niece!

The mainspring of the woman's hatred leaped. The world had coupled their names long ago, when the girl had first stolen away from the dreary Godwin house to the glamour and allurements of Drury Lane! And the world no doubt told the truth. If she could help to ruin him, line for line, name and fame—*as he had ruined Jane Clermont!*

In her vision rose the stooped figure of William Godwin, Jane's foster-father. He hated Gordon, she knew —and he had a connection with the *Courier,* the bitterest of them all.

Fletcher was in the lower hall as Mrs. Clermont passed out the street door. He knew the catastrophe that had befallen. Now his honest old eyes were full of grief and perplexity.

It was long past midnight when he ascended to his master's room. Gordon had thrown off his clothing and was stretched on the bed. He was asleep.

As the grizzled valet's eyes rested on the recumbent figure, he could see that one foot—the lame one—was uncovered. Through all the years of his service, he had never seen the member which Gordon's sensitiveness

concealed. He had often wondered curiously what was the nature of the deformity. How did it look?

Fletcher turned away, took a counterpane from a chair and with face averted, drew it over the uncovered foot. Then he shaded the candle and went out, and as he went, a tear splashed down his seamed and weather-beaten cheek.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BURSTING OF THE STORM

Over the great, crow-footed face of London, full of tragedies, a heavy fog had fallen. Dismal and murky, it lay like a bodiless incubus, shutting out the shining sun and the sweet smells of spring and showers. To Gordon, in the house on Piccadilly Terrace, the colorless dun had seemed to reflect his own feelings. He was numbed. His mind was stumbling through wastes of dumb protest.

The links of Mrs. Clermont's forging had held. The story of his wife's flight which the *Courier* had displayed on its front page had been a masterpiece of dark hints and veiled insinuations. To Gordon, who had read it with aching eyeballs, it had seemed printed in monstrous symbols of flame.

It was to prove the opening note of a chorus whose vicious strength he had not comprehended till the following day, when the avalanche of abuse broke over him with the morning newspapers. Every personal grudge, every pygmean hater of success, every cowering enmity that had sickened under his splendor had roused. He shut himself in the library, telling Fletcher he was at home to no one, and read grimly the charges they pre-

ferred: he had carried his unprincipled profligacy into his home and ensconced beneath his own roof a Drury Lane inamorata; he had persecuted his wife with inhuman cruelties, denied her the offices of religion, fired pistols in her bedroom to frighten her while she slept—these were the lightest of their accusations.

Gordon's mind, racing over the pages, was catching glimpses of heterogeneous elements which blended in a dim, dread futurity. He saw suddenly the inertia of Annabel's passive correctness—saw why his own name, with its eccentric dazzle, had stood forth blackly against her even ways, her spotless, conventional pureness. The mute contrast had always been there, and he had suffered accordingly. To the world she stood a martyr—a stony pillar, once a woman, who had looked back to catch some lurid fume from doomed cities sinking under Dead Sea waters.

Could the great world credit these monstrous calumnies? Might the reiterate malice of the public prints infect his nearer acquaintances—those at whose tables he had sat almost weekly, the cliques of the clubs, the gay set at Almack's, the circle of Melbourne House?

He drew a sharp breath, for he thought of William Lamb, heir to the Melbourne title, from whom he had daily expected a *cartel*. He would leave no path of revenge untrod; nor would Lady Caroline. Could their disassociate hatred envenom even the few for whose opinion he cared?

The *Courier* had reserved its bitterest attack. On the second day it published the stanzas entitled "Fare Thee Well," signed by Gordon's name. He saw them with a strange sensation, his mind grasping for the cords he

felt enmeshing him, his eyes fully opened now to the devilish ingenuity of his persecution.

But he himself stood appalled at the deadly effect of this attack. Innuendo was thrown aside; invective took its place. Paragraph, pamphlet and caricature held the lines up to odium. The hypocrisy of a profligate! A cheap insincere appeal to mawkish sympathy! A tasteless vulgar parade of a *poseur* strumming his heart-strings on the highway!

It came to Gordon with a start that during the past forty-eight hours he had forgotten his mail. He rang the bell and asked for his letters.

"There are none, my lord."

No letters? And daily for a year his table had been deluged with tinted and perfumed billets crested and sealed with signets of great houses. No letters!

"Who has called to-day?"

Fletcher's honest eyes could scarcely meet his master's. "Mr. Hobhouse called this morning, and Mr. Dallas this afternoon."

"That is all?"

"Yes, your lordship."

Gordon went to the fireplace and stared down dazedly into the embers. He had been a santon; now he was an Ishmaelite, a mark for the thrust of every scurrilous poetaster who wielded a pen—a chartered Blue-Beard—another Mirabeau whom the feudalists discovered to be a monster! The world had learned with pleasure that he was a wretch. Tom Moore was in Ireland, Sheridan dead. Of all he knew, only two rallied to his support: Hobhouse, the sturdy, undemonstrative, likable companion of his early travels, and—Dallas!

Gordon laughed bitterly. He had been London's favorite. Now, without justice or reason, it covered him with obloquy and went by on the other side.

There had followed days and nights of mental agony, of inner crying-out for reprisal—hours of fierce longing for his child, when he had sought relief in walking unfrequented streets from dark to dawn, in desultory composition, more often in the black bottle that lay in the library drawer. Meager news had reached his sister, and a brave, true message from her was the only cooling dew that fell into his fiery Sahara of suffering. A packet left by a messenger roused him to a white fury. It was from Sir Samuel Romilly, the solicitor under his retainer. Sir Samuel had reversed his allegiance. His curt note inclosed a draft of separation proposed by Sir Ralph Milbanke, and though couched in judicial phrases, voiced a threat unmistakable.

Almost a round of the clock Gordon sat with this paper before him, his meals untasted. His wife at that moment was with Ada—his child and hers!—at her father's house in Seaham. She had read the attacks—knew their falseness—knew and would not deny. Now he knew why. What she wanted was written in that document: freedom and her daughter. She would engulf him in calumny only so the world would justify her in her self-righteous desertion. And lest he put it to the test, lest he refuse to be condemned unheard and demand the arbitrament of an open though prejudiced tribunal, she threatened him with what further veiled accusations he could not imagine. Good God! Was there anything more to accuse him of? Better any

appeal to publicity now than this step which shut him from Ada!

Suppose he made this appeal. There was no justice in public opinion. In his case, it was already poisoned. Already it dubbed him a Nero, a Caligula, a Richard Third! Add to the present outcry new and more terrible charges—the formless insinuations of Sir Ralph—and what might not its verdict be? It would justify his wife, applaud the act which robbed him of his child! And these dark indictments, though false, would be no less an evil legacy for that daughter whom he loved with every fiber of his being.

To consent to lose Ada forever—or to risk both her loss and her blight. To battle, and jeopardize her life's happiness perhaps—or to yield and give tacit admission to the worst the world said of him, her father!

Night fell. At last he stirred and his square shoulders set. "To wait," he said—"to wait and be patient. That is all that is left. Whatever I must do, the world shall not see me cringe. The celebrity I have wrung from it has been in the teeth of all opinions and prejudices. I will show no white feather now!"

He laid the document aside, rose and looked in the glass. His face was haggard, worn; there were listless lines under his eyes. He summoned Fletcher and dressed with all his old scrupulousness—such a costume as he had worn the afternoon he had waked to fame. With a thought, perhaps, of that day, he drew a carnation through his buttonhole. Then he left the house and turned his steps toward Drury Lane.

The fog was gone, the air lay warm and pleasant, and a waxing moon shamed the street lamps. He

passed down St. James Street, and came opposite White's Club. He had no thought of entering. Lord Petersham descended the steps as he approached, his dress exquisite, his walking-stick held daintily between thumb and forefinger like a pinch of snuff. The fop's eyes met Gordon's in a blank stare.

A group of faces showed in the bow-window and for an instant Gordon hesitated, the old perverse spirit tempting him to enter, but he resisted it.

The first act was on when he reached Drury Lane Theater, and the lobby was empty save for the usual loungers and lackeys. The doors of the pit were open and he stood behind the rustling colors of Fops' Alley. He scanned the house curiously, himself unobserved, noting many a familiar face in the boxes.

Night after night the pit had roused to the veteran actor Kean. Night after night, Fops' Alley had furnished its quota of applause for a far smaller part, played with grace and sprightliness—by Jane Clermont, the favorite of the greenroom. Her first entrance formed a finish to the act now drawing to a close. To Gordon's overwrought senses to-night there seemed some strange tenseness in the air. Here and there heads drew together whispering. The boxes were too quiet.

As the final tableau arranged itself, and Jane advanced slowly from the wings, there was none of the usual signs of approval. Instead a disturbed shuffle made itself heard. She began her lines smiling. An ugly murmur overran the pit, and she faltered.

Instantly a man's form leaned over the edge of a box and hissed. The watcher, staring from the shadow of the lobby, recognized him with a quick stab of sig-

nificance—it was William Lamb. The action seemed a concerted signal. Some one laughed. An undulate hiss swept over the house like a nest of serpents. Even some of the boxes swelled its volume.

Jane shrank, looking frightenedly about her, bewildered, her hands clutching her gown; for the pit was on its legs now, and epithets were hurled at the stage. *"Crede Gordon!"* came the derisive shout—a cry taken up with groans and catcalls—and a walking-stick clattered across the footlights. The manager rushed upon the stage and the heavy curtain began to descend.

"The baggage!" said a voice near Gordon with a coarse laugh. "It's the one they say he had in his house when his wife left him. Serves her right!"

Gordon's breath caught in his throat. So this had been William Lamb's way! Not an appeal to the court of ten paces—an assassin in the dark with a bloodless weapon to slay him in the world's esteem!

He heard the din rising from the whole house, as he crossed the lobby and strode down the passageway leading to the greenroom.

CHAPTER XVIII

GORDON STANDS AT BAY

Jane Clermont had reached it before him, her eyes a storm of anger. She tore the silver ornaments from her costume, and dashed them at the feet of the manager. "How dare they! How dare they!" she flamed.

"Don't talk!" he snapped. "I must go on with the play or they will be in here in five minutes. Don't wait to change your dress—go! go, I tell you! Do you think I want my theater tumbled about my ears?"

He cursed as the dulled uproar came from beyond the dropped curtain.

Curious eyes had turned to Gordon, faces zestful, relishing, as he paused in the doorway. The girl had not seen him. But at that moment hurried steps came down the passage—a youth darted past Gordon and threw an arm about her.

"Jane!" he cried, "we were there—Mary and I—we saw it all! It is infamous!"

A flash of instant recollection deepened the vivid fire in Gordon's look as it rested on the boyish, beardless figure, whose quaint dress and roving eyes, bright and wild like a deer's, seemed as incongruous in that circle of paint and tinsel as in the squalor of the Fleet Prison. Shelley went on rapidly through Jane's incoherent words:

"Jane, listen! We're not poor now. We came to the play to-night to tell you the news. Old Sir Bysshe, my grandfather, is dead and the entail comes to me. We sail for the continent at daybreak. Mary is waiting in the carriage. Come with us, Jane, and let England go."

On the manager's face drops of perspiration had started. "Aye, go!" he foamed. "The quicker the better! His lordship is waiting—"

He shrank back, the sneer throttled on his lips, for there was that in Gordon's colorless features, his sparkling eyes, at which the man's tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

"George Gordon!" exclaimed Shelley under his breath.

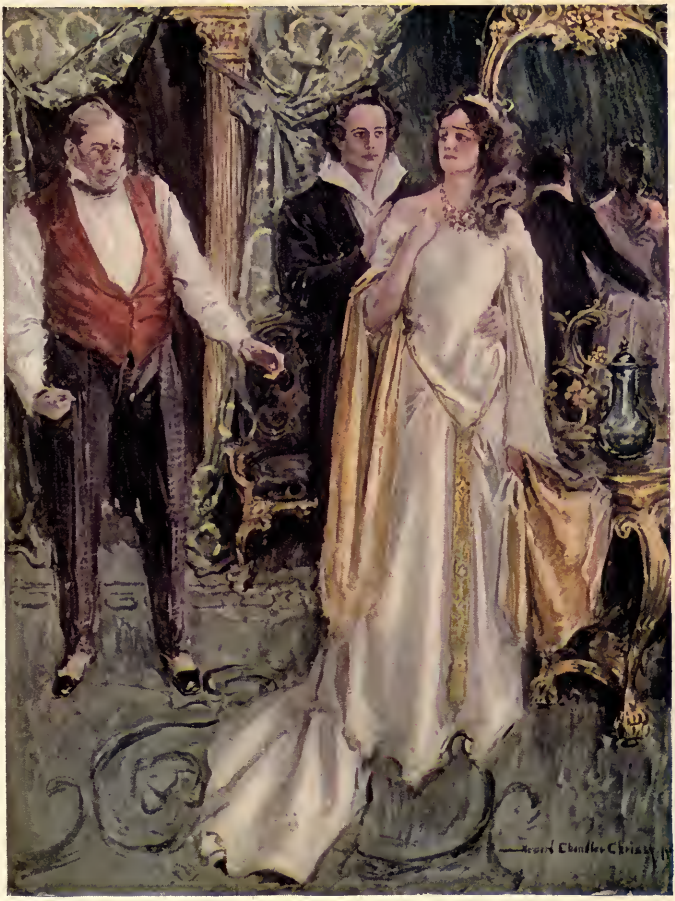
Jane's glance had followed his and she saw the figure at the door for the first time, as Gordon spoke:

"Cowards!" he said. "Cowards!"—a shrivelling rage was making his speech thick. "A thousand against one! It is I they hate, and they vent their hatred of me upon a woman! Such is the chivalry of this puddle of water-worms they call London!"

A sudden admiration swept the girl. "You dare them, too! You are not afraid!" She turned on the manager passionately. "I wouldn't play for them again for all London! I despise you all, in front of the curtain and behind it. Liars—all liars! Come, Bysshe, I will go with you!"

Shelley held out his hand to Gordon with an open, friendly, "Good-by, my lord."

Gordon had been looking at him steadily—looking, but with a strange irrelevance, seeing really himself,



"AYE, GO!" HE FOAMED. "THE QUICKER THE BETTER!" *p. 136.*

standing in his own room at a long-ago dawn, a goblet of brandy in his hand, and in his heart a determination rising anew—a wish to be like the youth whose clasp now met his own, with a like serenity and purpose, a soul to which fame meant least, truth and right all! In that year of dazzle before his marriage he had quenched that determination. He had worshiped the Great Beast. He had lived the world's life and played its games and accepted its awards. Now he suffered its punishments!

Malicious faces were peering in at the street entrance. The pit had overflowed into the lobby, the lobby into the street, and the numbers swelled from the hordes of the pave whose jargon banter flew back and forth. The jeering voices came plainly down the brick passageway.

"I will see you to your carriage," said Gordon, and went out with them.

They passed to the vehicle—from which Mary Shelley's frightened face looked out—through a vociferous human lane, that groaned and whistled in gusto.

"There's the jade; an' 'er lordship with 'er, too!"

"Which is 'im?"

"W'y, 'im with the leg."

At the gibe which followed Gordon smiled mirthlessly. This blind rabble, egged on by hatred that utilized for its ends the crass dislike of the scum for the refined—what was it to him? He knew its masters!

As Jane took her seat the jeers redoubled. Across the heads between him and the surging entrance of the theater he saw the sneering, heavy-lidded face of William Lamb. The sight roused the truculent demon of

stubbornness in him. With a flare of unrecking impertinence, and a racing recollection of a first dinner at Melbourne House, when he had given Lady Caroline Lamb such a blossom from his coat, Gordon drew the carnation from his buttonhole and handed it to Jane Clermont.

The crowd had looked to see him enter with the others; now as the vehicle rolled away, leaving him standing alone, the clamor, sharpened by his nonchalant act and by the smile which they could not translate, rose more derisive, more boldly mixed with insult. They were overcoming that dull inborn fear of the clod for the noble. There was menace in what they said, a foreshadowing of peril that might have fallen but for a diversion.

A coach, adroitly handled, whirled up to the kerbstone, and a man leaped to the pavement. Gordon felt a hand touch his arm.

"The carriage, my lord," said Fletcher.

The valet, guessing better than his master, had followed him. A sense of the dog-like fidelity of the old servitor smote Gordon and softened the bitter smile on his lips. Only an instant he hesitated before he entered the carriage, and in that instant a hand grasped at the horses' heads, but the coachman's whip fell and the plunging animals made an aisle through which the vehicle, hissed and hooted, rolled in safety.

As it drew away, a young man, dark and oriental looking, came through the crowd, staring wonderingly at the excitement. He was one who more than once on that spot had watched Gordon's approaching carriage with black envy and jealousy—the same who had

stood with Jane Clermont on the night Dr. Cassidy's suspicious gaze had made him draw closer into the shadow of the doorway. At the names the crowd coupled, he started, paled and hurried into the stage-entrance.

In an instant he emerged, breathing hard, heard the jeers of the crowd directed at the moving carriage, and, his fingers clenching, rushed into the street and gazed after it. It turned into Long Acre, going toward Piccadilly. He plunged into the network of side streets opposite and hastened rapidly in the direction it had taken.

It was not far to the house on Piccadilly Terrace, and he outstripped the coach. From the shadow he saw it stop, saw the man it carried dismount—alone.

"Where is she?" he muttered. "He took her from the theater—damn him! Where has he left her?"

The same bitter smile with which he had faced the clamor outside the theater was on Gordon's white face as he entered the house. In the hall he opened a single note of invitation, read it and laughed.

Rushton met him. "Mr. Dallas is in the library, your lordship."

Gordon strode into the room. Dallas saw that though he was smiling oddly, his face was deeply lined, and his eyes were glittering like those of a man with a fever.

"George," cried Dallas, "I was bound to see you! Why,—you are ill!"

"Not I, Dallas. I have been to Drury Lane to-night. All society was there, divorced and divorceable, intrigants and Babylonians of quality. Lady Holland,

like a hippopotamus in the face, and William Lamb with the very manner of the ursine sloth!"

There was genuine anxiety in Dallas' tone. "Come with me to Stratford for a few days," he besought. "Come now—to-night!"

"Not this week, old friend. I have social engagements to fill!" Gordon tossed him the note he held. "See! Lady Jersey, the loveliest tyrant that shakes the cap and bells of fashion's fools!—the despot of Almack's—the patroness-in-chief of the Dandy Ball, invites the reprobate, the scapegrace, to that sumptuous conclave! She dares the frown and risks pollution! Would you have me disappoint my only woman apologist in London? Shall I not reward such unparagoned courage with the presence of its parlor lion, its ballroom bard, its hot-pressed darling?"

He laughed wildly, sardonically, and jerked the bell.

"Fletcher, a bottle of brandy," he commanded, "and I shall not want you again to-night."

The valet set the bottle down with an anxious look at his master—a half-appealing one toward Dallas.

As the door closed, Gordon, sitting on the table-edge, began to sing with perfect coolness, without a quaver in the metallic voice:

"The Devil returned to hell by two,
And he stayed at home till five;
He dined on a dowager done *ragout*
And a peer boiled down in an Irish stew
And, quoth he, 'I'll take a drive!
I walked this morning, I'll ride to-night—
In darkness my children take delight—
And I'll see how my favorites thrive!'"

"Laddie!" Dallas' cry was full of pity and entreaty. "I beg of you—stop!" He went over and touched the other's arm.

"Listen, Dallas—

"The Devil he lit on the London pave
And he found his work done well.
For it ran so red from the slandered dead
That it blushed like the waves of hell!
Then loudly and wildly and long laughed he—
'Methinks they have here little need of me!'"

CHAPTER XIX

THE BURNING OF AN EFFIGY

Beau Brummell, pattern of the dandies, stood in Almack's Assembly Rooms, bowing right and left with the languid elegance of his station. The night before, in play at the Argyle, he had lost twenty thousand pounds at *macao,* but what mattered that to the czar of fashion, who had introduced starch into neck-cloths and had his top-boots polished with champagne, whose very fob-design was a thing of more moment in Brookes' Club than the fall of Bonaparte, and whose loss even of the regent's favor had not been able to affect his reign. He was a still fool that ran deep. He had been in debt ever since a prince's whim had given him a cornetcy in the Tenth Hussars; the episode now meant to him only another ruined Jew, and a fresh flight for his Kashmerian butterfly career.

He took snuff with nonchalant grace from a buhl snuff-box,—he had one for each day in the year,—and touched his rouged lips with a lace handkerchief of royal rose-point. His prestige had never been higher, nor his insolence more accurately applied than on this evening of the last of the Dandy Balls.

The club tables, where ordinarily were grouped play-

ers at whist and hazard, had vanished; brackets holding glass candelabra were distributed along the walls, and the pink shaded glow of myriads of wax tapers was reflected from mirrors set crosswise in every angle and surrounded by masses of flowers. The great tapestried ball-room,—a hundred feet in length,—in which Madame Catalani had given her famous concerts and Kean his readings from Shakespeare, was decorated with gilt columns, pilasters, and classic medallions with candles in cut-glass lusters. A string orchestra played behind a screen of palms and a miniature stage had been built across the lower end of the room.

Here were gathered the oligarchs of fashion and the tyrants of *ton*. The dandies—Pierrepont, Alvanley, Petersham, the fop lieutenants and poodle-loving worshipers of Brummell—with gold buckles glittering in their starched stocks, and brave in tight German trousers and jewelled eye-glasses, preened and ogled among soberer wearers of greater names and ladies of title, whose glistening shoulders and bare arms flashed whitely through the shifting stir of bright colors.

On the broad stair, under the chandeliers of crystal and silver, in the ball-room,—wherever the groups and the gossip moved that evening, one name was on every tongue. The series of tableaux rehearsed under direction of Lady Heathcote, and the new quadrille introduced from Paris by Lady Jersey, the features of the evening, were less speculated upon than was George Gordon. The hissing at Drury Lane had several new versions, and there were more sensational stories afloat. It was said he had entered Brookes' Club the day before, where no one had spoken to him; that the Horse Guards had

had to be sent for to prevent his being mobbed in Palace Yard as he attempted to enter the House of Lords. It was even confidently asserted that a motion was to be introduced in Parliament to suspend him from his privileges as a peer.

Lady Jersey, stately in black velvet and creamy lace, met John Hobhouse on the stair.

"Have you seen him?" she asked anxiously.

"No, but I have called every day. It was courageous of you to send him the invitation for to-night. No other patroness would have dared."

"I only wish he would come!" she flashed imperiously. "One would think we were a lot of New England witch-hunters! There is nothing more ridiculous than society in one of its seven-year fits of morality. Scandals are around us every day, but we pay no heed till the spasm of outraged virtue takes us. Then we pick out some one by mere caprice, hiss him, cut him—make him a whipping-boy to be lashed from our doors. When we are satisfied, we give our drastic virtue chloroform and put it to sleep for another seven years!"

Hobhouse smiled grimly at the gleam in her hazel eyes as she passed on to the lower room where the quadrille was to have its final rehearsal. Lady Jersey's was a despotic rule. She was as famous for her diplomacy as for her Sunday parties. More than one debate had been postponed in Parliament to avoid a conflict with one of her dinners. Gordon, he reflected, could have no more powerful ally.

He ascended to the ball-room, where the tableaux were oozing patiently on with transient gushes of ap-

probation: "Solomon and the Queen of Sheba," with Lady Heathcote as the queen; "Tamerlane the Great," posed by a giant officer of the foot-guards in a suit of chain-mail,—and subjects drawn from heathen mythology.

The last number, a monologue, was unnamed, but word had gone forth that the performer was to be Lady Caroline Lamb.

Slowly the curtain was drawn aside and a breath of applause stirred as Lady Caroline was revealed, in complete Greek costume, with short blue skirt and round jacket, its bodice cut square and low and its sleeves white from elbow to wrist. In that congress of beauties, decked in the stilted conventions of Mayfair modistes, the attire had a touch of the barbaric which suited its wearer's type—a touch accentuated by the jade beads about her throat and the dagger thrust through her girdle.

The fiddles of the orchestra had begun to play, as prelude, the music of the Greek love-song Gordon had written, long ago made popular in London drawing-rooms, and "Maid-of-Athens!" was echoed here and there from the floor.

The figure on the stage swept a slow glance about her, her cheeks dark and red from some under-excitement. She waved her hand, and from the wings came a procession of tiny pages dressed as imps, all in red.

A murmur of wonder broke from the crowd. Lady Caroline's vagaries were well-known and her wayward devisings were never without sensation.

"What foolery of Caro's can this be?" queried Brum-

mell to Petersham as the first page set up a tripod and the second placed upon it a huge metal salver.

The whole room was rustling, for it was clear, from the open surprise of the committee, that this was a feature not on the program. Those in the rear even stood on chairs while the scarlet-hued imps grouped about the tripod in a half-circle open toward the audience.

Lady Caroline clapped her hands and a last page entered dressed in red and black as Mephistopheles, carrying aloft on a wand what looked like a gigantic doll. The wand he fitted into a socket in the salver, and the dangling figure that swung from it, turning slowly, revealed a grotesque image of George Gordon.

The audience gazed at the effigy with its clever burlesque of each well-known detail,—the open rolling collar, the short brown curls pasted on the mask, the carnation in its buttonhole—startled at the effrontery of the idea. It was Brummell who gave the signal by an enthusiastic *Brava!*

Then the assemblage broke into applause and laughter that ran like a mounting wave across the flash and glitter of the ball-room, thundering down the refrain of the orchestra.

The applause stilled as Lady Caroline raised her hand, and recited, in a voice that penetrated to the furthermost corner:

"Is it Guy Fawkes we bring with his stuffing of straw?
No, no!. For Guy Fawkes paid his debt to the law!
But the cause we uphold is to decency owed,
By a social tribunal, unmarked by the code!

Behold here a poet—an eloquent thing
Which the Drury Lane greenroom applauded its king,
Who made all the envious dandies despair
By the cut of his cuffs and the curl of his hair."

She had spoken this doggerel with elaborate gestures toward the absurd manikin, her eyes gleaming at the applause that greeted each stanza. Unsheathing the dagger at her girdle, she waved it with a look of languishing that made new laughter.

"Who, 'tis said, when a fair Maid-of-Athens he pressed,
Swore his love on a dagger-scratch made on his breast!
And when they'd have drowned the poor creature, alack,
Brought gain to his glory by slitting the sack!"

John Hobhouse was staring indignantly, unable to control his anger. A note of triumph, more trenchant and remorseless than her raillery, grew into Lady Caroline's tone:

"His deportment, so evilly *mal-à-propos*,
At last sunk him far every circle below,
Till, besmirched by the mire of his flagrant disgrace,
The front door of London flew shut in his face.

So burn, yellow flame, for an idol dethroned!
Burn, burn for a Gordon, by Muses disowned!
Burn, burn! while about thee thy imps circle fast,
And give them their comrade, recovered at last!"

At the word "burn," the speaker seized a candle from a sconce and touched it to the figure, which blazed brightly up. The imp-pages grasped hands and began to run round and round the group. At the weird sight a tumult of applause went up from the whole multi-

tude, which clapped and stamped and *brava'd* itself hoarse.

Suddenly a strange thing happened—unexpected, anomalous, uncanny. The applause hushed as though a wet blanket had been thrown over it. Faces forsook the stage. The pages ceased their circling. Women drew sharp tremulous breaths and men turned eagerly in their places to see a man advancing into the assembly with halting step and with a face pale yet brilliant, like an alabaster vase lighted from within.

Some subtle magnetism had always hung about George Gordon, that had made him the center of any crowd. Now, in the tension, this was enormously increased. His sharply chiselled, patrician features seemed to thrill and dilate, and his eyes sparkled till they could scarce be looked at. A hundred in that room he had called by name; scores he had dined and gamed with. His look, ruthless, yet even, seemed to single out and hold each one of these speechless and staring, deaf to Brummell's sneer through the quiet.

Speech came from Gordon's lips, controlled, yet vital with subterraneous passion—words that none of that shaken audience could afterward recall save in part—hot like lava, writhing, pitiless, falling among them like a flaying lash of whip-cords:

"Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! I have heard hyenas and jackals in the ruins of Asia, Albanian wolves and angry Mussulmans! Theirs is sweet music beside the purr of England's scandal-mongers. I have hated your cant, despised your mediocrity and scoffed at your convention, and now, lacking the dagger and the bowl,—when deliberate desolation is piled upon me,

when I stand alone on my hearth with my household gods shivered around me,—you gather your pomp and rabblement of society to bait me!"

There was a stir at the door. Lady Jersey had entered, and John Hobhouse sprang to her side. She saw the blazing puppet and divined instantly the cruel farce that had been enacted. Her indignation leaped, but he caught her arm.

"No, no," he said, "it is too late."

The stinging sentences went on:

"So have you dealt with others, those whose names will be rung in England when your forgotten clay has mixed with its earth! Let them be gently born and gently minded as they may—as gentle as Sheridan, whom a year ago you toasted. He grew old and you covered him with the ignominy of a profligate, abandoned him to friendless poverty and left him to die like a wretched beggar, while bailiffs squabbled over his corpse! What mattered to him the crocodile tears when you laid him yesterday in Westminster Abbey? What cared he for your four noble pall-bearers—a duke, a pair of earls and a Lord Bishop of London? Did it lighten his last misery that you followed him there—two royal highnesses, marquises, viscounts, a lord mayor and a regiment of right-honorables? Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

"So you dealt with Shelley—the youth whose songs you would not hear! You hounded him, expelled him from his university, robbed him of his father and his peace, and drove him like a moral leper from among you! You write no pamphlets in verse—nor read them if a canon frowns! You sit in your pews on Sunday

and thank Fate that you are not as Percy Bysshe Shelley, the outcast! God! He sits so near that Heaven your priests prate of that he hears the seraphs sing!

"And do you think now to break *me* on your paltry wheel? You made me, without my search, a species of pagod. In the caprice of your pleasure, you throw down the idol from its pedestal. But it is not shattered; I have neither loved nor feared you! Henceforth I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. Attribute to me every phase of your vileness! Charge me with profligacy and madness! Make of my career only a washed fragment in the hartshorn of your dislike! Drive your red-hot plowshares, but they shall not be for me! May my bones never rest in an English grave, nor my body feed its worms!"

The livid sentences fell quivering, heavy with virile emphasis, like the defiance of some scorned augur, invoking the Furies in the midnight of Rome.

Hardly a breath or movement had come from those who heard. They seemed struck with stupor at the spectacle of this fiery drama of feeling. Lady Caroline was still standing, the center of the group of imp-pages, and above her hovered a slate-colored cloud, the smoke from the effigy crumbling into shapeless ashes. Her gaze was on the speaker; her teeth clenched; the mockery of her face merged into something apprehensive and terror-smitten.

In the same strained silence, looking neither to right nor left, Gordon passed to the entrance. Hobhouse met him half-way and turned with him to Lady Jersey. Gordon bent and kissed her hand, and as he went slowly down the stair, Lady Jersey's eyes filled with tears.

The spell was broken by a cry from the stage and Lady Heathcote's scream. Lady Caroline had swayed and fallen. The blade of the dagger which she still held had slipped against her breast as she fell, and blood followed the slight cut. The crowd surged forward in excitement and relaxation, while waves of lively orchestral music rolled over the confusion, through which the crumpled figure was carried to a dressing-room.

Only those near by saw the dagger cut, but almost before Gordon had emerged into the night a strange rumor was running through the assembly. It grew in volume through the after-quadrille and reached the street.

"Caroline Lamb has tried to stab herself," the whisper said.

CHAPTER XX

THE EXILE

Fletcher was watching anxiously for his master's return that night. When he entered, there were new lines in his face—the stigmata of some abrupt and fearful mental recoil.

"Order the coach to be got ready at once," Gordon directed, "and pack my portmanteau."

He went heavily into the library, gazing at the bookshelves with eyes listless and dull. Presently, with the same nerveless movements, he unlocked a drawer and took therefrom several small articles: a lock of Ada's hair—a little copy of "Romeo and Juliet" given him years before by his sister—and the black bottle. He thrust these into his great-coat pocket.

Amid the litter of papers on his desk a document met his eye: it was the draft of separation submitted by Sir Samuel Romilly. Through his mind flitted vaguely his struggle as he had sat with that paper before him. The struggle was ended; justice was impossible. It remained only to sign this, the death-warrant of his fatherhood. He wrote his name without a tremor, franked it for the post and laid it in plain view, as Fletcher entered to announce the carriage.

The deep lines were deeper on Gordon's face as he went to the pavement; he moved like a sleep-walker, his body obeying mechanically the mandate of some hidden, alert purpose working independently of eye and brain. An inner voice rather than his own seemed to give the direction—a direction that made the coachman stare, made Fletcher with a look of dismay seize coat and hat and climb hurriedly to the box beside him.

Gordon did not see this—he saw nothing, knew nothing, save the rush of the coach through the gloom.

When the worn night was breaking into purple fringes of dawn, Gordon stood on the deck of a packet outbound for Ostend, looking back over the wine-dark water where the dissolving fog, hung like a fume of silver-gray against the white Dover cliffs, built a glittering city of towers and banners. Under the first beams the capricious vapors seemed the ghosts of dead ideals shrouding a harbor of hate. His youth, his dreams, his triumphs, his bitterness, his rebellion, his grief, all blended, lay there smarting, irreparable. Before him stretched wanderings and regrets and broken longings.

"Your coffee, my lord!"—a familiar voice spoke. Fletcher stood behind him, tray in hand, trepidation and resolve struggling in his countenance.

Gordon took the coffee mechanically. "How did you come here?"

"With the coach, my lord."

"Where are you going?"

The valet's hand shook, and he swallowed hard. "Your lordship knows best," he said huskily.

Gordon gazed a moment out across the misty channel. When he set down the cup his face had a look that brought to the other's eyes a sudden gladness and utter devotion.

"Thank you, Fletcher," he said gently, and turned his gaze away.

Presently, as the light quickened, he drew paper from his pocket, put the copy of "Romeo and Juliet" beneath it for support, and with the book resting on the rail, began to write. What he wrote—strange that chance should have furnished for his tablet now a story of such deathless love!—was a letter to Annabel:

"A few final words—not many. Answer I do not expect, nor does it import. But you will at least hear me. I leave in England but one being whom you have left me to part with—my sister. Wherever I may go—and I may go far—you and I can never meet in this world. Let this fact content or atone, and if accident occurs to me, be kind to her; or if she is then also nothing, to her children. For never has she acted or spoken toward you but as your friend. You once promised me this much. Do not deem the promise cancelled—for it was not a vow.

"Whatever I may have felt, I assure you that at this moment I bear you no resentment. If you have injured me, this forgiveness is something; if I have injured you, it is something more still. Remember that our feelings will have one rallying point so long as our child lives. Teach Ada not to hate me. I do not ask for justification to her—this is probably beyond the power of either of us to give—but let her not grow up believing I am a deserving outcast from my kind, or lying dead in some forgotten grave. For the one would sadden her young mind no less than the other. Let her one day read what I have written, and so judge me. And recollect that though now it

may be an advantage to you, yet it may sometime come to be a sorrow to her to have the waters or the earth between her and her father.

"Whether the offense that has parted us has been solely on my side or reciprocal, or on yours chiefly, I have ceased now to reflect upon any but two things—that you are the mother of my child, and that we shall never meet again."

CHAPTER XXI

GORDON SWIMS FOR A LIFE

From London to Ostend, and through Flanders, a swart shadow trailed George Gordon slowly but unerringly. It was the man whose dark, reckless face had once turned with jealous passion to Jane Clermont as they had watched a carriage approaching Drury Lane; he who, on a later night, had pursued the same vehicle, then a mark for jeers, to Piccadilly Terrace. The question he had uttered as he saw Gordon alight alone, had rung in his brain through his after-search: "Where has he left her?" The London newspapers had not been long in chronicling Gordon's arrival in Ostend, and thither he followed, making certain that in finding one he should find the other.

The chase at first was not difficult. Evil report, carried with malicious assiduity by spying tourists and globe-trotting gossip-mongers, had soon overtaken his quarry, and Gordon's progress became marked by calumnious tales which hovered like obscene sea-birds over the wake of a vessel. Gordon had gone from Brussels in a huge coach, copied from one of Napoleon's taken at Genappe, and purchased from a travelling Wallachian nobleman. The vehicle was a noteworthy object, and

early formed the basis of lying reports. A paragraph in the *Journal de Belgique* met the pursuer's eye on his first arrival in Ostend.

It stated with detail that a Flemish coachmaker had delivered to the *milor Anglais* a coach of the value of two thousand eight hundred francs; that on going for payment, he found his lordship had absconded with the carriage; that the defrauded *sellier* had petitioned the *Tribunal de Première Instance* for proper representation to other districts, that the fugitive might be apprehended and the stolen property seized. With this clipping in his pocket the man who tracked Gordon followed up the Rhine to the confines of Switzerland. Here he lost a month, for the emblazoned wagon *de luxe* had turned at Basle, and, skirting Neufchâtel, had taken its course to Lake Geneva.

Gordon had travelled wholly at random and paused there only because the shimmering blue waters, the black mountain ridges with their epaulets of cloud and, in the distance, the cold, secular phantom of Mont Blanc, brought to his jaded senses the first hint of relief. In the Villa Diodati, high above the lake, the English milord with the lame foot, the white face and sparkling eyes, stayed his course, to the wonder of the country folk who speculated endlessly upon the strange choice which preferred the gloomy villa to the spires and slate roofs of the gay city so near. And here, to his surprise, Gordon found ensconced, in a cottage on the high bank, Shelley and his young wife, with the black-eyed, creole-tinted girl whom the Drury Lane audience had hissed.

So had chance conspired to color circumstance for the rage of tireless hatred that was following.

The blows that had succeeded the flight of Annabel with his child had left Gordon stunned. The flaming recoil of his feeling, in that fierce denunciation at Almack's, had burned up in him the very capacity for further suffering, and for a time the quiet of Diodati, set in its grove above the water like a bird's nest among leaves, was a healing anodyne.

From his balcony Mont Blanc and its snowy *aiguilles* were screened, but the sun sank roseate behind the Jura, and it lifted again over vineyarded hills which echoed the songs of vine-dressers and the mellow bells of sauntering herds. Below, boats swept idly in the sun, or the long lances of the rain marched and marshalled across the level lake to the meeting and sundering of the clouds.

There came a time too soon, when the dulled nerves awoke, when the whole man cried out. In the sharpest of these moods Gordon found respite at the adjacent cottage, where Shelley, whose bright eyes seemed to drink light from the pages of Plato or Calderon, read aloud, or Jane Clermont, piquant and daring as of old, sang for them some song of Tom Moore's. Or in the long days the two men walked and sailed, under a sky of garter-blue, feeling the lapping of the waves, living between the two wondrous worlds of water and ether, till for a time Gordon laid the troubled specters of his thoughts in semi-forgetfulness.

One day they drove along the margin of the lake to Chillon and spent a night beneath the frowning château walls that had entombed Bonnivard. On the afternoon of their return, sitting alone on the balcony with the gloom of those dungeons still upon him, gazing

far across the lake, across the mountains, toward that home from which he had been driven, Gordon, for the first time since he had left England, found relief in composition. He wrote of Chillon's prisoner, but the agony in the lines was a personal one:

"I made a footing in the wall,
It was not therefrom to escape,
For I had buried one and all
Who loved me in a human shape;
No child—no sire—no kin had I,
No partner in my misery;
But I was curious to ascend
To my barred windows, and to bend
Once more, upon the mountains high,
The quiet of a loving eye."

He wrote in the dimming luster of a perfect day. Below him rippled the long lake churning an inarticulate melody, and a tiny island with trees upon it rested the eye. As he gazed, beyond the dazzling beryl foliage, set in the sunset, a spot rivetted his look. A moment before the white sail of a boat had glanced there; now a confused flat blur lay on the water.

Gordon thrust his commonplace-book into his pocket and leaned forward, shading his eyes from the glow. The blot resolved itself into a capsized hull and two black figures struggling in the water, one with difficulty supporting the other.

The next moment he was dashing down the bank, hallooing for Fletcher, peeling off coat and waistcoat as he went.

"There's a boat swamped," he shouted, as the valet came through the garden. "Where is the skiff?"

"Miss Clermont has it, my lord."

Gordon plunged in, while Fletcher ran to summon the Shelleys. They came hurrying along the vineyard lane with frightened faces, Mary to watch from the high bank, and Shelley, who could no more swim than Fletcher, to stride up and down, his long hair streaming in the wind. The excitement brought a picturesque dozen of goitred vine-dressers from the hillside, who looked on with exclamations.

All were gazing fixedly on the lake, or they might have seen two men enter the grounds from the upper road. Of these, one was a Swiss with a severe, thin face and ascetic brow, the syndic of Cologny, the nearest town—a bigot functionary heartily disliked by the country people. The other was a Genevan attorney. From the road they had not seen the catastrophe, and the overturned boat, the struggling figures, and the swimmer forging to the rescue came to their view all at once.

Gordon was swimming as he had never done save once —when he had swum the Hellespont years before, and in mid-channel a strange, great piebald fish had glided near him. The lawyer saw him reach and grasp the helpless man, and, supporting him, bring him to shore. He sniffed with satisfaction.

"Only one man in the canton can swim like that," he said, "and that's the one you came to see. No wonder the peasants call him 'the English fish'!"

The young man whom Gordon had aided wore a blonde curling beard, contrasting strongly with his older companion's darker shaven cheeks and bushy black Greek eyebrows. The unseen spectators on the terrace saw him drink from his rescuer's pocket-flask—saw him

rise and grasp the other's hand and knew that he was thanking him. As they watched, a servant ran to the coach-house, and the syndic observed:

"He's sending them into town by carriage. They're going indoors now. We'll go down presently."

"Take my advice," urged the attorney above the terrace, "and let the Englishman alone. Haven't we court business enough in Switzerland, that we must work for Flanders? What have we to do with the complaints of Brussels coachmakers? And how do you know it's true, anyway?"

The syndic's lips snapped together.

"I know my business," he bridled. "He is a worshiper of Satan and a scoffer at religion."

"And you'd burn him with green wood if you could, as Calvin did Servetus in the town yonder, eh?"

"He has committed every crime in his own country," went on the other angrily. "He has formed a conspiracy to overthrow by rhyme all morals and government. My brother wrote me from Copet that one of Madame de Staël's guests fainted at seeing him ride past, as if she had seen the devil. They say in Geneva that he has corrupted every grisette on the *rue Basse!* Do you think he is too good to be a thief? Murderer or absconder or heretic, it is all one to me. Cologny wants none such on her skirts. Let us go down," he added, rising; "it will be dark soon."

The counsellor shrugged his shoulders and followed the other over the sloping terrace.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FACE ON THE IVORY

When Gordon descended the stair he came upon a striking group at the villa entrance. Shelley, with his wife beside him, confronted the severe-faced syndic, who stood stolidly with the comfortably plump *avocat*. A look of indignation was on his brow, and Mary's face was perturbed.

"Here he is," said the functionary in his neighborhood *patois,* and with satisfaction.

"You have business with me?" asked Gordon.

"I have. I require you to accompany me at once to Cologny on a matter touching the peace of this canton."

"And this matter is what?"

"You speak French," returned the syndic tartly; "doubtless you read it as well,"—and handed him a clipping from the *Journal de Belgique.*

Gordon scanned the fragment of paper, first with surprise, then with a slow and bitter smile. He had not seen the story, but it differed little from scores of calumnies that had filled the columns of less credulous newspapers in London before his departure. It was a breath fresh from the old sulphur bed of hatred, brought sharply to him here in his solitude.

"I see," he said; "this states that a certain English milord had turned highwayman and deprived an honest Fleming of a wagon? How does it affect me?"

"Do you deny that you have the wagon?" demanded the syndic curtly.

"*The* wagon? I have *a* wagon, yes. One bought for me by my servant."

"In Brussels?"

"As it happens, in Brussels." The paleness of Gordon's face was accentuated now, and his eyes held cores of dangerous flame. "And because I am an English milord, and bring a wagon from Brussels, you assume that I am a robber?"

"You were driven from your own country," menaced the other. "Do you think we hear nothing, we Swiss? This canton knows you well enough! Stop those horses!" he snarled, for the great coach, ready for its trip to the town, was rolling down the driveway. The syndic sprang to the horses' heads.

At the same instant the two strangers who had been in the overturned boat, now with clothing partially dried, came from the house.

"There!" The syndic pointed to the ornate vehicle. "Do you deny this is the wagon described in that newspaper, and that you absconded with it from Brussels?"

The older of the two strangers turned quick eyes on Gordon, then on the wagon. Before Gordon could reply, he spoke in nervous French:

"I beg pardon. I was the owner of that conveyance, and the one who sold it."

"Maybe," said the functionary, "but you did not sell it to this person, I have reason to believe."

"No, yonder is the purchaser." He pointed to a prosaic figure at the steps.

"His valet!" Shelley thrust in explosively.

"I told you so," grunted the man of law, and stared with the surprise of recognition, as the syndic, ruffling with anger, turned on the strangers with sarcasm: "Friends of the English milord, no doubt!"

The counsellor laid a hasty hand on his sleeve:

"Stop!" he said. "I think I have had the honor of meeting these gentlemen in Geneva. Allow me to present you, monsieur, to Prince Mavrocordato, minister of foreign affairs of Wallachia, and"—he turned to the latter's younger companion—"his secretary, Count Pietro Gamba, of Ravenna."

The sour-faced official drew back. These were names whose owners had been public guests of the canton. This Englishman, evil and outcast as he might be, he had no legal hold upon. He could scarcely frame a grudging apology, for the resentment of self-righteousness that was on his tongue, and stalked off up the terrace in sullen chagrin not consoled by the chuckles of the attorney beside him.

Gordon saw them go, his hands trembling. He replied mechanically to the grateful farewells of the two strangers as they entered the coach, and watched it roll swiftly down the darkening shore road, a quivering blur before his eyes. A fierce struggle was within him, the peace which the tranquil poise of Shelley's creed had lent him, warring against a clamant rage.

Not only in England was he maligned. Here, on the edge of this mountain barrier, defamation had followed him. The pair riding in his own carriage knew who

he was; the older had spoken his name and title. And they had not elected to stay beyond necessity. Yet for their momentary presence, indeed, he should be grateful. But for this trick of coincidence he should now be haled before a bungling Genevan tribunal, his name and person a mark for the sparring of pettifogging Swiss officials!

These thoughts were clashing through his mind as he turned and walked slowly down to the bank where Shelley's Swiss servant had moored the stranger's rescued boat, bailed out and with sail stretched to dry. The sunset, as he stood, flamed redly across the lake, its ray glinting from the rim of a bright object whose broken chain had caught beneath the boat's gunwale. He leaned and drew it out.

It was an oval miniature backed with silver—the portrait of a young girl, a face frail and delicately hued, with fine line of chin and slender neck, with wistful eyes the deep color of the Adriatic, hair a gush of tawny gold, skin like warm Arum lilies, and a string of pearls about her neck. Evidently it had belonged to one of the two men with whom the craft had capsized. It was too late now to overtake the coach; he would send it after them that evening.

He turned the miniature over. On the back was engraved a name: "Teresa Gamba." Gamba? It had been one of the names spoken by the attorney, that of the young count for whose rescue he had swum so hard.

He looked again at the ivory. His wife? No, no; innocence of life, ignorance of its passions and parades were there. His sister? Yes. The fair hair and blue eyes were alike. And now he caught a subtle resem-

blance of feature. She was dear to this brother, no doubt—dear as was his own half-sister to him, well-nigh the only being left in England who believed in him and loved him.

He looked up at a hail from the lake. A boat was approaching, bearing a single feminine rower. As he gazed, she looked over her shoulder to wave something white at the porch.

"It is Jane. She has been to the post," cried Shelley from the terrace, and hastened down the bank.

Gordon thrust the ivory into his pocket as the skiff darted in to the landing.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE DEVIL'S DEAL

As he took the two missives the girl handed him Gordon caught his breath, for one he saw was directed in Annabel's hand. For a moment a hope that overleaped all his suffering rose in his brain. Had those months wrought a change in her? Had she, too, thought of their child? Had the cry he voiced on the packet that bore him from England struck an answering chord in her? He opened its cover. An inclosure dropped out.

He picked it up blankly. It was the note he had pencilled on the channel, returned unopened.

The sudden revulsion chilled him. He broke the seal of the second letter and read—read while a look of utter sick whiteness crept across his face, a look of rage and suffering that marked every feature.

It was from his sister, a letter written with fingers that soiled and creased it in their agony, blotted and stained with tears. For the thing it told of was a dreadful thing, a whispered charge against him so damning, so satanic in its cruelty, that though lip might murmur it to a gloating ear, yet pen refused to word it. The whole world turned black before him, and

the dusk seemed shot through with barbed and flaming javelins of agony.

He crushed the letter in his hand, and, with a gesture like a madman's, thrust it into Shelley's, turning to him a countenance distorted with passion, *gauche,* malignant, repulsive.

"Read it, Shelley," he said in a strangled voice. "Read it and know London, the most ineffable centaur ever begotten of hypocrisy and a nightmare! Read what its wretched lepers are saying! There is a place in Michael Angelo's 'Last Judgment' in the Sistine Chapel that was made for their kind, and may the like await them in that of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—Amen!"

With this fearful imprecation he flung away from their startled faces along the winding vineyarded lane, on into the dusk, lost to a sense of direction, to everything save the blackness in his own soul.

The night fell, odorous with grape-scents, and the moon stained the terraces to amber. It shone on Gordon as he sat by the little wharf where the skiff rocked in the ripples, his eyes viewless, looking straight before him across the lake.

For him there was no sanctuary in time or in distance. The passage he had read at Newstead Abbey in his mother's open Bible, beside her body, flashed through his mind: *And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest. . . . In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning!* He had found—should find—no ease nor rest! The captive of Chillon had been bound only with fetters of

iron to stone pillars. He was chained with fiery links of hate to the freezing walls of the world's contumely!

Footsteps went by along the shadowy lane. Shelley's voice spoke: "He will come back soon, and we must comfort him if we can."

The words came distinctly as the footsteps died away.

Something clutched tangibly at Gordon's soul. In that instant his gaze, lifted, rested on a white square in the moonlight. It was a familiar enough object, but now it appeared odd and *outré*. He rose and approached it. It had been a sign-post bearing an arrow and the words "Villa Diodati." Now malice had painted out the name and replaced it with new and staring characters.

"Atheist and Fool." It glared level at him with a baleful malevolence that chilled the moment's warmer softening into ice. Atheist! Without God. What need, then, had he for man? Let the moralists have it so, since they stickled so lustily for endless brimstone. Fool? He would be so, then! His brain should lie fallow and untilled—he would write no more!

With a quick gesture he drew from his pocket his commonplace-book. He laid it against the disfigured sign-board, pencilled a few words on its cover and, turning, hurled it far from him into the shrubbery.

A twig snapped. He looked around. Jane Clermont stood near him, her eyes smiling into his, fringed with intoxication and daring.

"I know," she said; "they are hounding you still. They hated me, too!" She came quite close to him. "What need we care? What are they all to us?"

It was the Jane of the Drury Lane greenroom he saw

now—the Jane whose brilliance and wit had held him then; but there was something deeper in her look that he had never seen before: a recklessness, an invitation and an assent.

"Jane!" he exclaimed.

She touched his hand. "Why should we stay here? Let us go away from them all—where they cannot follow us to sting!"

Gordon stared at her, his eyes holding hers. To go away—with her? To slip the leash of all that was pagan in him? What matter? He was damned anyway—a social Pariah; why strive to undeserve the reputation? His thought was swirling through savage undercurrents of vindictive wrath, circling, circling like a Maelstrom, about this one dead center: Civilization had cast him off. Henceforth his life was his own, to live to himself, for his own ends, as the savage, as the beast of the field. To live and to die, knowing that no greater agony than was meted to him now could await him, even in that nethermost reach where the lost are driven at the end.

"We must comfort him if we can!" The words Shelley had spoken seemed to vibrate in the stillness like the caught key of an organ. He turned to where Villa Diodati above them slept in the long arms of the night shadows, listening to the contending voices within him. Comfort? The placid comfort of philosophy for him whose flesh was fever and his blood quicksilver? In this girl life and action beckoned to him—life full and abundant—forgetfulness, wandering, and pleasure, fleeting surely, but still his while it should last! And yet—

The girl's hand was on the skiff. On a sudden a cry of fear burst from her lips and she shrank back as a

disordered figure broke from the darkness and clutched Gordon's arm fiercely.

"Where are you taking her now?"

Gordon's thought veered. In his numbness of feeling there scarce seemed strangeness in the apparition. As he looked at the oriental, mustachioed face, haggard and haunted, his lips rather than his mind replied:

"Who knows?"

"You lie! You ruined her career and stole her away from London and from me! Now you want to take her from these last friends of hers—for yourself! But you can not go where I will not find you! And where you go the world shall know you and despise you!"

Jane's eyes flashed upon the speaker. "You!" she cried in contemptuous anger. "You hated him even in London; now you have followed him here. It is you who have set the peasants to spy upon us! It is you who have spread tales through Geneva! You whose lies sent the syndic to-day!"

Gordon had been staring at the Moorish, theatric face with a gaze of singular inquiry, his brain searching, searching for a lost clue. All at once the haze lightened. His thought leaped across a chasm of time. He saw a reckless youth, a deserter from the navy, whom he had befriended in Greece—a youth who had vanished suddenly from Missolonghi during the feast of Ramazan. He saw a shambling, cactus-bordered road to the seashore—a file of Turkish soldiers, the foremost in a purple coat, and carrying a long wand—a beast of burden bearing a brown sack—

"Trevanion!" he said. "Trevanion—by the Lord!"

He burst into a laugh, reëchoing, sardonic, a laugh

now of absolute, remorseless unconcern, of crude recklessness flaunting at last supreme over crumbled resolve —the laugh of a zealot flagellant beneath the lash, a derisive Villon on the scaffold.

"So I stole her from *you!* You, even you, dare to accuse me. Out of my sight!" he said, and flung him roughly from the path.

Gordon held out his hand to Jane Clermont, lifted her into the skiff, and springing in, sent the slim cockle-shell shooting out into the still expanse like an arrow on the air.

Then he took up the oars and turned its prow down the lake to where the streaming lights of the careless city wavered through the mists, pale green under the moonbeams.

The journal which Gordon had hurled from him lay in the vine-rows next morning when Shelley, with a face of trouble and foreboding, passed along the dewy lane. He read the words written on its cover:

"And all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death. I will keep no record of that same hesternal torch-light; and to prevent me from returning, like a dog, to the vomit of memory, I throw away this volume, and write in *Ipecacuanha:* Hang up justice! Let morality go beg! To be sure, I have long despised myself and man, but I never spat in the face of my species before—'O fool! I shall go mad!'"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

"Your coffee, my lord?"

It was Fletcher's usual inquiry, repeated night and morning—the same words that on the Ostend packet had told his master that his wanderings were shared. After these many months in Venice, where George Gordon had shut upon his retreat the floodgates of the world, the old servant's tone had the same wistful cadence of solicitude.

Time for Gordon had passed like wreckage running with the tide. The few fevered weeks of wandering through Switzerland with Jane Clermont—he scarcely knew where or how they had ended—had left in his mind only a series of phantom impressions: woods of withered pine, Alpine glaciers shining like truth, Wengen torrents like tails of white horses and distant thunder of avalanches, as if God were pelting the devil down from Heaven with snowballs. And neither the piping of the shepherd, nor the rumble of the storm; not the torrent, the mountain, the glacier, the forest or the cloud, had lightened the darkness of his heart or enabled him to lose his wretched identity in the Power and the Glory above and beneath him.

In that night at Geneva the tidal wave of execration which had rolled over his emerging manhood had left as it ebbed only a bare reef across which blew cool, infuriate winds of avid recklessness; and through these insensate blasts he moved in a kind of waking somnambulism, in which his acts seemed to him those of another individual, and he, the real actor, poised aloft, watching with a sardonic speculation.

At Rome his numbed senses awakened, and he found himself alone, and around him his human kind which he hated, spying tourists and scribblers, who sharpened their scavenger pencils to record his vagaries. He fled from them to Venice, where, thanks to report, Fletcher had found his master.

But it was a changed Gordon who had ensconced himself here, a Gordon to whom social convention had become a sneer, and the praise or blame of his fellows idle chaff cast in the wind. He ate and drank and slept—not as other men, but as a gormand and *débauché.* Such letters as he wrote—to his sister, to Tom Moore, to Hobhouse—were flippant mockeries. Rarely was he seen at opera, at *ridotto,* at *conversazione.* When he went abroad it was most often by night, as though he shunned the daylight. More than one cabaret in the shadow of the Palace of the Doges knew the white satiric face that stared out from its terrace over the waterways, where covered gondolas crept like black spiders, till the clock of St. Mark's struck the third hour of the morning. And more than one black and red-sashed boatman whispered tales of the Palazzo Mocenigo on the Grand Canal and the "*Giovannotto Inglese* who spent great sums."

The *gondolieri* turned their heads to gaze as they sculled past the carved gateway. Did not the priests call him "the wicked milord"? And did not all Venice know of Marianna, the linen-draper's wife of the street Spezieria, and of Margarita Cogni, the black-eyed *Fornarina,* who came and went as she pleased in the milord's household? They themselves had gained many a coin by telling these tales to the tourists from the milord's own country, who came to watch from across the canal with opera-glasses, as if he were a ravenous beast or a raree-show; who lay in wait at nightfall to see his gondola pass to the wide outlying lagoon, haunted the sand-spit of the Lido, where he rode horseback, and offered bribes to his servants to see the bed wherein he slept. They took the tourists' *soldi* shamefacedly, however, for they knew other tales, too: how he had furnished money to send Beppo, the son of the fruit peddler, to the art school at Naples; how he had given fifty *louis d'or* to rebuild the burned shop of the printer of San Samuele.

"Your coffee, my lord?" Fletcher repeated the inquiry, for his master had not heard.

"No; bring some cognac, Fletcher."

The valet obeyed, though with covert concern. He had seen the inroads that year had made; they showed in the lines on the pallid face, in the brown hair now just flecked with gray, in the increasing fire in the deep eyes. The brandy sat habitually at his master's elbow in these days.

It was two hours past midnight, for to Gordon day and night were one, and sleep only a neutral inertness, worse with its dreams than the garish day he dreaded.

On the hearth a fire blazed, whose flame bred crimson marionettes that danced over the noble carved ceiling panels, the tall Venetian mirrors supported by gilt lions, the faded furnishings and the mildew-marked canvases whose portraits looked stonily from the walls.

A gust of voices and the sound of virginals, flung up from the canal, came faintly through the closed casement. He moved his shoulders wearily. Yesterday had been Christmas Day. To-night was the eve of St. Stephen, the opening of the carnival season, with every corner osteria a symphony of fiddles, when Venice went mad in all her seventy islands. What were holidays, what was Christmas to him?

Even in the warm blaze Gordon shivered. Ghosts had troubled him this day. Ghosts that stalked through the confused mist and rose before him in the throngs that passed and repassed before his mind's eye. Ghosts whose diverse countenances resolved themselves, like phantasmagoria, into a single one—the pained eager face of Shelley. The recurring sensation had brought a sick sense of awakening, as of something buried that stirred in its submerged chrysalis, protesting against the silt settling upon it.

But brandy had lost its power to lay those ghosts. He went to the desk which held the black phial, the tiny glass comforter to which he resorted more and more often. Once with its surcease it had brought a splendor and plenitude of power; of late its relief had been lent at the price of distorted visions. As he drew out the thin-walled drawer, its worm-eaten bottom collapsed and its jumble of contents poured down on the mahogany.

He paused, his hand outstretched. Atop of the

mélange lay a silver-set miniature. He picked it up, holding it nearer the light. A girl's face, hued like a hyacinth, looked out of his palm, painted on ivory. A string of pearls was about her neck.

For an instant he regarded the miniature fixedly, his recollection travelling far. The pearls aided. It was the one he had found in the capsized boat at Villa Diodati! He had purposed sending it after the two strangers. The events of that wild night had effaced the incident from his mind, as a wet sponge wipes off a slate. Fletcher, finding the oval long ago in a pocket lining, had put it in the desk drawer for safe-keeping, where until this moment it had not met his master's eye.

"Teresa." Gordon suddenly remembered the name perfectly. With the memory mixed a sardonic reflection: the man who had lost the miniature that day in Switzerland had hastened away with clothing scarce dried. Well, if that brother had deemed himself too good to linger with the outcast, the balance had been squared. The sister, perforce, had made a longer stay!

He put down the miniature, found the phial of laudanum and uncorked it, but the face drew him back. It was not the external similitude now, but something beneath, unobserved the day he had found it—the pure sensibility, shining unsullied through the transparent media. A delicate convent slip, she seemed, not yet transplanted to the unsifted soil of the world! A strange portrait for him to gaze upon here in this palace of ribaldry—him, the moral Caliban, the dweller in Golgotha on whose forehead was written the *hic jacet* of a dead soul!

The antithesis of the picture, bold, Medea-like, tall

as a Pythoness, with hair of night, black flashing eyes and passion blent with ferocity, projected itself, like a materialization in a *séance,* from the air. He turned his head with a sensation of bodily presence, though he knew the one of whom he thought was then in Naples. If she should enter and find him with that ivory in his hand, what a rare sirocco would be let loose!

He tried to smile, but the old arrant raillery would not come. The miniature blotted out the figure of the *Fornarina.* Against his will, it suggested all the pure things that he had ever known—his youthful romance, his dreams, Ada, his child!

Holding it, he walked to a folded mirror in a corner of the wall and opened its panels. There had been a time when he had said no appetite should ever rule him; the face he saw reflected now wore the lines of incorrigible self-indulgence, animalism, the sinister badge of the bacchanal.

"Is that you, George Gordon?" he asked.

The ghosts drew nearer. They peered over his shoulders. He felt their fingers grasping at him. He cursed them. By what right did they follow him? By what damnable chance, ruled by what infernal jugglery, came this painted semblance to open old tombs? Something had awakened in him—it was the side that recollected, remorseless and impenitent but no longer benumbed, writhing with smarting vitality. Awake, it recoiled abashed from the voiceless *vade retro* of that symbol. What part had he in that purity whose visible emblem mocked and derided him? What comradeship did life hold for him save the hideous Gorgon of memory, the

"IS THAT YOU, GEORGE GORDON?" HE ASKED. *p. 178.*

Cerberus of ill fame, spirits of the dark, garish fellows of the half-world—"they whose steps go down to hell!"

A fury, demoniac, terrible, fell on him. He seized the miniature, dashed it on the floor, stamped it with his heel and crushed and ground it into indistinguishable fragments.

Then he sprang up, and with an oath whose note was echoed by the tame raven croaking on the landing, rushed down the stairway and threw himself into his gondola.

The moon rose red as a house afire. Before it paled, he had passed the lagoon. In the dim light that presaged the sodden dawn he leaped ashore on the mainland, pierced the damp laurel thickets that skirted the river Brenta and plunged into the forest.

CHAPTER XXV

TERESA MEETS A STRANGER

Through the twittering dawn, with its multitudinous damp scents, its stubble-fields of maize glimpsed through the stripped ilex trees, whose twigs scrawled black hieroglyphics on the hueless sky, Gordon strode sharply, heedless of direction.

The convulsion of rage with which he had destroyed the miniature had finished the work the latter's advent had begun. The nerve, stirring from its opiate sleep to a consciousness of dull pain, had jarred itself to agony. His mind was awake, but the wind had swept saltly through the coverts of his passion, and their denizens crouched shivering.

The sight of a dove-tinted villa guarded by cypress spears—a gray gathering of cupolas—told him he had walked about two miles. This was La Mira, one of the estates of the Contessa Albrizzi, a great name in Venice. He turned aside into the deserted olive grove above the river. A slim walk meandered here, thick with dead leaves, with a cleared slope stretching down to where the deep-dyed Brenta twisted like a drenched ribbon on its way to the salt marshes. Fronting this breach, Gordon came abruptly upon a wooden shrine, with a weather-fretted prayer bench.

He stopped, regarding it half-absently, his surcharged thought rearranging disused images out of some dusty speculative storehouse. A more magnificent shrine rose on every campo of Venice. They stood for a priestly hierarchy, an elaborate clericalism—the mullioned worship that to his life seemed only the variform expression of the futile earth-want, the satiric hallucination of finite and mortal brain that grasped at immortality and the infinite. This, set in the isolation of the place, seemed a symbol of more primitive faith and prayer, of religion rough-hewn, shorn of its formal accessories.

He went a step nearer, seeing a small book lying beside the prayer bench. He picked it up. It was a reprint in English of his own "Prisoner of Chillon," from a local press in Padua.

A sense of incongruity smote him. It was the poem he had composed in Geneva. He readily surmised that it was through Shelley the verses had reached his publisher in England, to meet his eye a year afterward, in a foreign dress, in an Italian forest.

He turned the pages curiously, conning the scarce remembered stanzas. Could he himself have created them? The instant wonder passed, blotted out by lines he saw penned in Italian on the fly-leaf—lines that he read with a tightening at his heart and an electric-like rush of strange sensations such as he had never felt. For what was written there, in the delicate tracery of a feminine hand, and in phrases simple and pure as only the secret heart of a girl could have framed them, was a prayer:

"Oh, my God! Graciously hear me. I take encourage-

ment from the assurance of Thy word to pray to Thee in behalf of the author of this book which has so pleased me. Thou desirest not the death of a sinner—save, therefore, him whom Venice calls 'the wicked milord.' Thou who by sin art offended and by penance satisfied, give to him the desire to return to the good and to glorify the talents Thou hast so richly bestowed upon him. And grant that the punishment his evil behavior has already brought him be more than sufficient to cover his guilt from Thine eyes.

"Oh blessed Virgin, Queen of the most holy Rosary! Intercede and obtain for me of thy Son our Lord this grace! Amen."

A step fell behind him. He turned half-dazed, his mind full of conflict. A girl stood near him, delicate and alert and wand-like as a golden willow, her curling amber hair loosely caught, her sea-blue eyes wide and a little startled. She wore a Venetian hood, out of whose green sheath her face looked, like lilies under leaves.

Gordon's mind came back to the present of time and space across an illimitable distance.

He stared, half believing himself in some automatic hallucination. There had been no time to speculate upon what manner of hand had written those words, what manner of woman's soul had so weirdly touched his own out of the void. Knowledge came staggeringly. Hers was the face of the miniature that his heel had crushed to powder.

He noted that her eyes had fallen to the book in his hand, as mechanically he asked, in Italian:

"This book is yours, Signorina?"

"Yes." There was a faint flush of color in her cheek, for she saw the volume was open at the written page.

Gordon was looking at her palely, seeing her face set in a silver oval. Eyes, hair and lips; there in lifeless pigments, here in flesh and blood! The same yet more, for here were unnunned youth, slumbrous, glorious womanhood unawaked, stirring rosily in every vein, giving a passionate human tint to the spiritual impression. And underneath all, the same unsullied something he had raged at that black night, even while her prayer for him lay here dumb at the feet of Our Lady of Sorrows!

His voice sounded unreal to his own ears as he spoke, his mind feeling its way through tumbled predispositions to an unfamiliar goal. "If apology be owed," he said, "for reading what was intended for purer eyes than this world's, I most humbly offer it, Signorina! I did so quite inadvertently."

He held out the book as he spoke, and her fingers closed over it, the gesture betraying confusion. Who was this stranger, with face of such wan luster and gray-blue eyes so sadly brilliant? Some sense in her discerned a deeper, unguessed suffering that made her heart throb painfully.

"If there be an ear which is open to human appeal," he added gently, "that prayer was registered, I know!"

He spoke calmly enough, but a hundred thoughts were ricochetting through his mind. Pulpits had fulminated against him, priest and laic had thundered him down, but when—in London, in Geneva, in Venice—had a single disinterested voice been lifted in a prayer for him before? And this girl had never seen him.

"If there be!" Her thought stirred protestingly.

"Ah, Signore, surely there is Someone who hears! How could one live and pray otherwise?"

How indeed? To such a one as she, to pray and to live were one and the same thing. Prayer to her was not a mental process—it was as instinctive and unconscious as breathing. For such as she, shrines like this were erected; not for him! So, across the riot in his breast, Gordon's waked habit paused to smile—a satire-smile, at itself, at the new sweet flower that was lifting head there amidst desert ruins.

The girl caught the mixed feeling in his face. He was not Italian—his accent had told her that. He was an Englishman, too, perhaps. "Do you know him, Signore?"

His head turned quickly toward her. In truth, had he ever really known himself? "Yes," he answered after a pause. "I know him, Signorina—far better than most of the world."

She was gazing with varied feelings, her heart beating strangely, curiosity and wonder merging. In her few short weeks at La Mira, fresh from the convent, the Englishman of whom all Venice told tales had been but a dim and unsubstantial figure. She had thought of the grim Palazzo Mocenigo with a kind of awe, as a child regards a mysterious cavern bat-haunted and shunned. Into her poetic world of dreams had fallen the little book, and thereafter the shadowy figure that roamed nightly Venice had taken on the brilliant and piteous outline of a fallen angel. Here, wonderfully, was a man who knew him, whose speech could visualize the figure that had grown to possess such fascination. Questions were on her tongue, but she could not frame

them. She hesitated, opening and closing the book in her hands.

"Is he all they say of him?"

"Who knows, Signorina?"

It was an involuntary exclamation that sounded like acquiescence. The girl's face fell. In her thought, the man of her dreaming, lacking an open advocate, had gained the secret one of sympathy. Was it all true then? Her voice faltered a little.

"I have not believed, Signore, that with a heart all evil one could write—so!"

Into the raw blend of tangent emotions which were enwrapping Gordon, had entered, as she spoke, another well-defined. Never in his life, for his own sake, had he cared whether one or many believed truth or lie of him. But now there thrilled in him, new-born, a desire that this slight girl should not judge him as did the world. The feeling lent his words a curious energy:

"Many tales are told, Signorina, that are true—some that are false. If he were here—and I speak from certain knowledge of him—he would not wish me to extenuate; least of all to you who have written what is on that leaf. Perhaps that has been one of his faults, that he has never justified himself. By common report he has committed all crimes, Signorina. He has thought it useless to deny, since slander is not guilt, nor is denial innocence, and since neither good nor bad report could lighten or add to his wretchedness."

The tint of her clear eyes deepened. "I knew he was wretched, Signore! It was for that reason I left the prayer here overnight before Our Lady of Sorrows—because I have heard he is an outcast from his own coun-

try and his own people. And then, because of this." She touched the volume. "Ah, I have read little of all he has written—this is the only poem—for I read his English tongue so poorly; but in this his heart speaks, Signore. It speaks of pain and suffering and bondage. It was not only the long-ago prisoner he sang of; it was himself! himself! I felt it—here, like a hurt."

She had spoken rapidly, stumblingly, and ended with a hand pressed on her heart. Her own feeling, as she suddenly became aware of her vehemence, startled her, and she half turned away, her lips trembling.

A sentiment at variance with his whole character was fighting in Gordon. The Babel he had builded of curses was being smitten into confusion. Something granite-like, mural and sealed by time, was breaking and melting unaccountably away. His face was turned from hers—toward the slope below, where the river bubbled and sparkled. When he spoke it was in words choked and impeded:

"I think if he were here—this wicked milord—he would bless you for that, Signorina. He has suffered, no doubt. Perhaps if there had been more who felt what he wrote—as you have felt,—if there had been more to impute good of him rather than evil—I am quite sure if this could have been, Signorina, he would not now be in Venice the man for whom you have written that prayer. I know him well enough to say this. It is through his wretchedness that I have come to know him—because, like him, I am a wanderer."

A softer light suffused her cheek. The words smote her strangely. His pain-engraved face brought a mist to her eyes. She was a child of the sun, with blood

leaping to quick response, and a heart a well of undiscovered impulses. The wicked milord's form lost distinction and faded. Here was a being mysterious, wretched, too, and alone—not intangible as was he of the Palazzo Mocenigo, but beside her, speaking with a voice which thrilled every nerve of her sensitive nature. Unconsciously she drew closer to him.

At that moment a call came under the bare boughs: "Teresa! Teresa!"

She drew back. "It is *la Contessa,*" she said; "I must hasten," and started quickly through the trees.

His voice overtook her. "Signorina!" The word vibrated. "Will you give me the prayer?" He had come toward her as she stopped. "There is a charm in such things, perhaps."

The voice called again, and more impatiently: "Teresa!"

She opened the book and tore out the leaf with uncertain fingers. As he took it his hand met hers. He bent his head and touched it with his lips. She flushed deeply, then turned and ran through the naked trees toward the villa shielded in its cypress rows.

The girl ran breathlessly to the terrace, where a lady leaned from a window with a gently chiding tongue:

"Do they teach you to do wholly without sleep in convents?" she cried. "Do you not know your father and Count Guiccioli, your lord and master to be, are to arrive to-day from Ravenna? You will be wilted before the evening."

The girl entered the house.

Under the olive wood a man, strangely moved, a rustling paper still in his hand, walked back with quick

strides to his gondola, striving to exorcise a chuckling fiend within him, who, with mocking and malignant emphasis, kept repeating:

"Oh blessed Virgin, Queen of the most holy Rosary! Intercede and obtain for me, of Thy Son our Lord, this grace!"

CHAPTER XXVI

A WOMAN OF FIRE AND DREAMS

From the moment those lips touched her hand in that meeting at the wood shrine Teresa Gamba felt her life unfold to rose-veined visions.

Her unmothered childhood and the placid convent school years at Bagnacavallo, near Ravenna, had known no mystery other than her day-dreams had fashioned. She had dreamed much: of the time when she should marry and redeem the fortunes of her house, which, despite untainted blood and ancient provincial name, was impoverished; of the freedom of Italy, the sole topic, aside from his endless chemical experiments, of which her father, now growing feeble, never tired; of her elder brother, away in Wallachia, secretary to the Greek Prince Mavrocordato; of the few books she read, and the fewer people she met. But these dreams had not possessed the charm of novelty. Even when, at eighteen, through family friendship, she became a member of the Albrizzi household and exchanged the dull convent walls for the garlanded La Mira—even with those rare days when she saw the gay splendor of Venice from a curtained gondola—even then her mental life suffered small change.

The marriage arranged for her with Count Guiccioli, the oldest and richest nobleman of Ravenna, a miser and twice a widower, had aroused an interest in her mind scarce greater than had the tales of the Englishman of the Palazzo Mocenigo. Such marriages were of common occurrence in the life she knew: the "wicked milord" was a stranger thing—one to speculate more endlessly upon.

It was Tita, the gigantic black-bearded gondolier and door-porter, a servant in the Gamba family since she was born, whom she had brought with her as her own attendant—one who worshiped her devoutly, and in whose care her father intrusted her more confidently than to any duenna—who had first pointed out to her the gloomy building which shielded that mysterious occupant, and had piqued her interest with weird tales: how in his loneliness for human kind the outcast surrounded himself with tamed ravens and paroquets, and used for a wine cup a human skull, that of a woman he had once loved. With her rapt eyes on the palazzo front, Teresa had wondered and shuddered in never ending surmise.

The little volume from the Paduan press had deepened her curiosity and given it virgin fields in which to wander. The English books in her father's library were prose and for the most part concerned his pet hobby, chemistry. This volume, given her on a saint's day by the Contessa Albrizzi, who took pride in her *protégée's* scholarship, was her first glimpse of English poetry, and her pulses had leaped at the new charm. Thereafter the personality of the contradictory being who had written it had lived in her daily thought. She retained the

faiths of her childhood unshattered, and the prayer she had left at the shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows sprang from an impulse as natural as it was significant.

But that meeting in the wood had turned the course of her imaginings. "A wanderer—like him"; the words had bridged the chasm between the dreaming and the real. The secret thought given to the "wicked milord" found itself absorbed by a nearer object. The palazzo on the Grand Canal grew more remote, and the stranger she had seen stepped at a single stride into a place her mind had already prepared.

The blush with which she had taken the book from Gordon's hand was one of mere self-consciousness; the vivid, burning color which overspread her face as she ran back through the trees was something very different. It was a part of her throbbing heart, of the tremulous confusion that overran her whole body, called into life by the touch of those palely carved lips upon her fingers. His colorless face—a face with the outline of the Apollo Belvedere—the gray magnetic eyes, the words he had said and their accent of sadness, all were full of suggestive mystery. Why was he a wanderer—like that other? Not for a kindred reason, surely! He could not be evil also! Rather it must have been because of some loss, some hurt of love which time might remedy.

Her agile fancy constructed more than one hypothesis, spun more than one romance, all of like ending. A new love would heal his heart. Some time he would look into a woman's eyes—not as he had looked into hers; some one would feel his lips—not as he had kissed her hand. She in the meantime would be no longer a

girl; she would be the Contessa Guiccioli, with a palazzo of her own in Ravenna, and—a husband.

But, somehow, this reflection brought no satisfaction. The old count she had seen more than once driving by in state when she played as a child in the convent woods; and that he with his riches should desire her, had given her father great pride, which was reflected in her. Her suitor had brought his age and ailments to La Mira on the very day she had met the stranger at the shrine—the day her heart had beat so oddly—and with his arrival, her marriage had projected itself out of the hazy future and become a dire thing of the present. She felt a fresh distaste of his sharp yellow eyes, his cracked laugh. His eighty wiry years seemed as many centuries. She became moody, put her father off and took refuge in whims. The contessa advised the city, and the week's end saw the Albrizzi palazzo thrown open.

In Venice, Teresa's spirits rose. She loved to watch the bright little shops opening like morning-glories, the sky-faring pigeons a silver quiver of wings; to lie in the gondola waiting while her father drank his brandy at the piazzetta *caffè;* to buy figs from little lame Pasquale, who watched for her at a shop-door in a narrow *calle* near at hand; to see the gaudy flotillas of the carnival, and the wedding processions, fresh from the church, crossing the lagoon to leave their gifts at the various island-convents; or, propelled by Tita's swinging oar, to glide slowly in the purpling sunset shadows, by the Piazza San Marco, around red-towered San Giorgio, and so home again on color-soaked canals in the gleaming ruby of the afterglow, through a city bub-

bling with ivory domes and glistening like an opal's heart under its tiara of towers.

She scarcely told the secret to her own heart—that it was one face she looked to see, one mysterious stranger whose image haunted every campo, every balcony and every bridge. She flushed whenever she thought of that kiss on her fingers; in the daytime she felt it there like a sentient thing; at night when she woke, her hand burned her cheek.

Who was he? Why had he asked her for the prayer? What had he done with it? Was he still in Venice? Should she see him again? She wondered, as, parting the gondola *tenda,* she watched her father cross the pave for his cognac.

"Are there many English in Venice, Tita?"

The gondolier, lounging like a brilliant-hued lizard, shrugged his shoulders. "*Bellissima,* there are hundreds in the season. They come and go. They are all *lasagnoni,* these Englishmen!"

Teresa's sigh checked itself. Tita suddenly turned his head. Across the piazzetta a crowd was gathering. It centered before the shop at whose front the five-year-old fig-seller was used to watch for her.

"He fell from the scaffolding!" said a voice.

"If it should be little Pasquale!" cried Teresa, and springing out, ran quickly forward. Tita waited to secure the gondola before he followed her.

A sad accident had happened. Before the *calle* a platform had been erected from which spectators might watch the flotillas of the carnival. Little Pasquale's delight was a tame sparrow, whose home was a wicker cage, and climbing to sun his pet when he had been left

to tend the empty shop, the child had slipped and fallen to the pavement.

Teresa broke through the circle of bystanders and knelt by the tumbled little body, looking at the tiny face now so waxen. The neighbors thronged about, stupefied and hindering. A woman ran to fetch the mother, gossiping with a neighbor. Another called loudly for a priest.

The girl, looking up, was bewildered by the tumult. "He must be got in," she murmured, half helplessly, for the people ringed them round.

A voice answered close beside her: "I will carry him, Signorina"—and a form she knew bent beside her, and very gently lifted the small bundle in his arms.

Teresa's heart bounded. Through these days she had longed to hear that voice again how vainly! Now, in this moment, she was brought suddenly close to him. She ceased to hear the sounds about her—saw only him. She sprang up and led the way through the press, down the close damp *calle* and to the shop where the child lived.

"Dog of the Virgin! He need touch no finger to child of mine!" swore a carpenter from the adjoining campo.

"Nor mine!"

"Why didn't you carry him in yourself, then?" growled Giuseppe, the fruit-vender. "Standing there like a bronze pig! What have you against the Englishman? Didn't he buy your brother-in-law a new gondola when the piling smashed it?"

"Scellerato!" sneered the carpenter. "Why is his

face so white? Like a potato sprout in a cellar! He is so evil he fears the sun!"

The fruit-vender turned away disdainfully. His foot kicked a shapeless wicker object—it was little Pasquale's cage smashed flat. The sparrow inside was gasping. He picked up the cage and carried it to the shop.

In the inner, ill-lighted room, Gordon laid the child on a couch. He had spoken no further word to Teresa. At the first sight of her, kneeling in the street, he had started visibly as he had done in the forest of La Mira when he recognized her face as that of the miniature. Now he was feeling her presence beside him with a curious thrill not unlike her own—a pleasure deeply mixed with pain that was almost a physical pang.

Since that dawn walk above the plane-treed Brenta he had been treading strange ways. In the hours that followed, remorse had been born in him. And as the first indrawn breath racks the half-drowned body with agony greater than that of the death it has already tasted, so the man had suffered. During a fortnight, words written on a sheet of paper that he carried in his pocket had rung through his brain. Day after day, as he sat in his gloomy palazzo, he had heard them; night after night they had floated with him as his gondola bore him through the waterways ringing with the *estro* of the carnival. To escape them he had fled again and again to the black phial, but when he awoke the pain was still with him, instinct and unrenounceable. It was more acute at this moment than it had ever been.

Teresa scarcely noted the fruit-vender as he put the battered cage into her hand just before its feathered occupant breathed its last. Her look, fixed on Gordon,

was still eloquent with the surprise. She saw the same pale face, the same deep eyes, the same chiselled curve of lips. His voice, too, as he despatched the kind-hearted Giuseppe for a surgeon on the Riva, had the same cadence of sadness. She had noticed that his step halted as he walked, as though from weakness. And surely there was illness in his face, too! Had there been any tender hands near him—as tender as those with which he now examined the unconscious child?

As Gordon bent above him, little Pasquale opened his eyes. His gaze fell first not on the man or on Teresa, but on the broken cage beside him, where the bird lay still, one claw standing stiffly upright. He tried to lift his head, and called the sparrow's name.

There was no answering chirp. The claw was very still.

Then little Pasquale saw the faces about him and knew what had happened.

"He's dead!" he shrilled, and burst into tears.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE EVIL EYE

Tears, too, had rushed to Teresa's eyes, with a sweet, glad sense of something not akin to grief. Her hand on the couch in the semi-darkness touched another and she drew it away, trembling.

Suddenly a wail came from the *calle,* a hurried step crossed the shop floor, and the slattern mother burst into the room. Close behind followed Tita, who, seeing his mistress, blocked the inner door with his huge frame against the curious, with whom the place now overflowed.

The weeping woman had thrown herself beside the couch where the child lay, his eyes closed again. All at once she saw the man who stood above her, and to Teresa's astonishment sprang up and spat out coarse imprecations.

"The evil eye!" she screamed. "Take the *Inglese* away and fetch some holy water! He has the evil eye!"

Teresa saw the spasm of pain that crossed the colorless face. "No, no!" she cried.

"What did I say!" sneered the carpenter.

Tita's great hand took him by the throat. "Silence,

devout jellyfish!" he said, "or I crack your skull. Didn't you hear the signorina?"

"The evil eye!" wailed the woman, flinging back inky hair from her brows. "He looked at the heart-of-my-life or he would not have fallen!"

"For shame!" protested Teresa indignantly. "He who carried him in his own arms! Ah, do not listen!" She turned to Gordon appealingly. "She is mad to say such things! Let us go," she added hastily, as murmurs swelled from the shop. "We can do no more!"

"Go, son of the Black One!" screamed the woman. "Go before my child dies!"

Gordon had distinguished in the girl's voice a note of pity and of fear for his safety, and a flash of smile softened the bitterness of his lips.

"You are right, Signorina," he answered, and preceded her. The people parted as they passed, some peering maliciously, some shame-faced. Tita, bringing up the rear, glared about him, his fist clenched like a hammer. He knew well enough who the stranger was, but his signorina walked with him and that was sufficient. Tita knew what was expected of him.

It was growing dusky as they emerged. The group before the shop had run to watch the great surgeon alighting at the water-stairs. The dozen steps that brought them to the open piazzetta they walked in silence.

There Teresa paused, wishing to say she knew not what, burning with sympathy, yet timid with confusion. The street seemed to wear an unwonted, un-everyday luster, yet she knew that around the corner lay little Pasquale woefully hurt, in full view Tita was unlash-

ing the gondola, and across the piazzetta she could see the entrance of the *caffè* where her father was sipping his cognac. A fear lest the latter should appear and find her absent from the gondola mixed with the wave of feeling with which she held out her hand to the man beside her.

"Poor little fig-merchant!" she said—the scene with the mother was too painfully recent to touch upon at once. "He watched for my gondola every day. I hope he is not badly hurt. What do you think, Signore?"

"No bones were broken," he rejoined. "But as to internal injury, I could not tell. I shall hope doubly for him," he added, "since you love him."

Her eyes sought the ground, suddenly shy. "I have loved him from the first. You know, he cannot play like other children. He is lame; I think that is why I love him."

Gordon's lips compressed, his cheeks flushed with an odd sensitiveness that had long been calloused. But he saw instantly that the remark had been innocent of allusion. A weird forgotten memory shot jaggedly through his brain. Years ago—how many years ago!—he had overheard a girl's voice repeat a mocking antithesis: "Do you think I could ever care for that lame boy?" This girl facing him had the same fair hair and blue eyes of that boyish love of his. The resemblance caught him. Was it this that had haunted him in the miniature? Was this subconscious influence what had inspired at La Mira his aching desire that she should not think worse of him than might be?

Her voice recalled him. She had not understood that veiled look, but it brought to her lips what had been

nearest to her thought—the resentment and regret that the virago's shrilling voice had roused.

"What must you think of our Venice, Signore!" she said. "But they knew no better—those poor people. They cannot tell evil from good."

"It is no matter, Signorina," Gordon answered. "Do not give it a thought. It was not unnatural, perhaps."

"Not unnatural!" she echoed. "Natural to think you evil? Ah, Signore—when your every touch was kindness! Could she not see in your face?"

She paused abruptly, coloring under his gaze.

The words and the flush had cut him like a knife. The lines of ravage he had challenged in the mirror her innocence had misread. In the olive wood she had seen only wretchedness, here only mercy.

"The face is a sorry index, sometimes, Signorina. In mine the world may not see what you see."

He had schooled his tone to lightness, but her mood, still tense-drawn, felt its strain. She spoke impulsively, bravely, her heart beating hard.

"What I see there—it is pain, not evil, Signore; sorrow, but not all your own; loneliness and regret and feelings that people like those"—she threw out her hand in a passionate gesture toward the shop—"can never understand!"

"It is not only such as they!" he interposed. "The world, your world, would not understand, either. It is only here and there one finds one—like you, Signorina—with sympathy as pure as yours."

Her face had turned the tint that autumn paints wild strawberry leaves, a rich translucent flush that deepened the light in her eyes. It was a lyric world to-

day! Just then Tita's voice spoke warningly from the water-side. She looked around, and through the gathering shadows, saw her father's form standing in the door of the *caffè* across the piazzetta.

"Oh!" she said confusedly, and turning, hastily crossed the pavement to the gondola.

Tita's oar swung vigorously on the return, for Count Gamba was in haste. He was voluble, but Teresa, as she looked out through the curtains, was inattentive.

Swiftly as they went, a gondola outstripped them on the canal. It held the low-browed carpenter whom Tita had throttled in the shop. In addition to a superstitious mind, the carpenter possessed a malicious tongue and loved a sensation. He knew that the father of little Pasquale was at work that day on the Giudecca. As the doctor had driven all save the mother from the shop, there was little profit to be got by remaining. He therefore hastened to bear the news to the quay where the stone masons labored overtime. He had drawn his own conclusions. The child was mortally hurt—dying, doubtless—and as he revolved in his mind the words with which he should make the announcement to the father, the wicked milord and his evil eye entered with all their dramatic values.

Teresa noted the speed of the gondola as it passed to tie to the rising wall, saw the gesticulations of the blue-clad workmen as the man it bore told his story. Even in the failing light she saw the gesture of grief and despair with which one, the center of all eyes, threw up his arms and sank down on to the stones, his head in his hands. As her father's gondola swept by, the

figure sprang up suddenly and his brown hand flew to his belt.

"My Pasquale—dead!" he shouted; "I'll kill the *Inglese!*"

Teresa stifled a cry. Her father had seen and heard also, though he did not know the explanation. Nor could he have guessed what an icy fear had gripped the heart of the girl beside him.

"An ugly look!" he muttered, as the frantic form scrambled into the carpenter's craft.

Teresa could not speak. Her horrified gaze was on the sinister face, the red cap like a *sans-culotte,* the eye glancing under it tigerishly. Little Pasquale was dead then! The father blamed the Englishman. His look was one of murder! He would kill him—of whom she had thought and dreamed, the man in whose heart had been only tenderness! Kill him? A panging dread seized her. She felt as if she must cry out; and all the time Tita's oar swept her on through the dusk, further away from him whom danger threatened—him whom, in some way, no matter how, she must warn!

A strange helplessness descended upon her. She did not even know his name, or his habitation. To her he was but one of the hundreds Tita had said were in Venice. That the gondolier himself could have enlightened her did not cross her mind. She felt the impossibility of appealing to her father—she had not even dared tell him she had left the gondola. What could she do? Trust to Tita to find him? Could he know every line of that face as did she? Even in the dark—in crowds—she told herself that she would know him, would somehow feel his presence. But how to do it?

How to elude the surveillance at home? And if she could do so, where to look for him?

Her reverie was broken by the gondola's bumping against the landing. Her father's talk had been running on like a flowing spout.

"A palazzo in Ravenna finer than this," he was saying, "and you the Contessa Guiccioli! Shall we not be proud—eh, my Teresa?"

She realized suddenly of what he had been babbling. As she disembarked at the water-stairs, she looked up at the balcony. There, beside the stately Contessa Albrizzi, an old man was leaning, hawk-eyed, white-haired and thin. He blew her a kiss from his sallow fingers.

Her nervous tension relaxed in a sudden quiver of aversion.

"No, no!" she said in a choked voice, with clenched fingers. "I will not marry till I choose! Why must every one be in such haste?"

And with these broken sentences, that left her father standing in blank astonishment, she hurried before him into the house.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE HAUNTED MAN

The majestic gateway of the Palazzo Mocenigo was dark as Gordon entered save for the single lamp always lit at nightfall. Fletcher served his master's supper in the great upper room, but to-night, as too often happened, it was scarcely tasted. Long after the valet had retired, his watchful ear heard the uneven step pacing up and down, up and down, on the echoing floor.

A restless mood was upon Gordon, the restlessness of infinite yearning and discontent. He was tasting anew the gall and wormwood of self-reproach.

He had felt the touch of Teresa's hand as it lay against the couch in that squalid room—had known it trembled—and the low words she had spoken in the street, standing, as it seemed to him, with that forest shrine ever for background, were still in his ears.

He had seen her but twice, for but a few brief moments. Once she had come to him on the wings of a prayer; and again to-day over the hurt body of a child. Each meeting had touched the raw nerve in him which had first throbbed to anguish at sight of her miniature. Each time he had heard a voice call to him as if it were the ghost of some buried thing he had one day known and lost, speaking a tongue sweet though untranslatable.

Hours went by. Gordon's step flagged. He approached the desk on which were scattered distraught leaves of manuscript, blotted and interlined. He swept these into his hand and read for a moment. Beneath the outer crust of flippancy and satire a strange new development had begun. But the mental habit had persisted strong during the moral *bouleversement,* as the polar glaze spreads its algid mockery above the warm currents of an Arctic spring. How his muse had bemocked him, he thought. A drama of madness, whose *dramatis personae* were magicians and spirits of the nether world—stanzas hovering between insane laughter and heart-broken sobs, between supplications and blasphemies—cantos whose soul was license, though their surpassing music thrilled like the laughter of a falling Lucifer!

He flung the sheets down, went to the window and threw it open, leaning out across the balcony that hung over the canal. It was a night of Italian sorcery, the sky an infinite wistaria canopy nailed with white-blown stars; of musical water shimmering into broken bits of moon; of misty silver air. Around and beneath him spread the enchanted city, a marvel of purple and mother-of-pearl, a jewel in verd and porphyry. Gondolas, dim in the muffled shadow, or ablaze with strung lanterns and echoing with tinkling virginals and softer laughter, glided below, on their way to the masked ball of the Cavalchina. The fleeting thrill, the bubble pageant; what did they all—what did anything mean now for him?

Looking out, Gordon's gaze went far. He had a vi-

sion of England as he had last seen it across the jasper channel—green fields and white cliffs in a smother of vapors; of London with its pomp, its power, its calumnies, its wicked magical vitality. And he spoke to it, murmuring sentences not sneering now, but broken with a stranger soft emotion:

"What you have done—you island of home! If I could tell you! I had the immortal flame—the touch of the divine! It was mine—all mine, for the world! You took me—my boyhood and embittered it, my youth and debauched it, my manhood and robbed it! You jeered my first songs and it stung me, and when I cried out in pain, you laughed and flattered. When you tired of me, you branded me with this mark and cast me out!" He turned again to the desk where lay the manuscript. "What I write now has the mark of the beast! It is the seraph's song with the satyr laugh cutting up through it, and the cloven hoof of the devil of hatred that will not down in me! And yet I wrote the poem that *she* loves! I wrote that—I! My God! It was only two years ago! And now—shall I never hear that voice singing in my soul again? Shall I never write so again? Never—never—never?"

A pungent, heavy smell of flowers filled his nostrils. He turned from the window, quivering. Fletcher had entered behind him and was arranging a mass of blooms in a bowl.

The *Fornarina!* She had returned from Naples, then. It was her barbaric way of announcing her coming, for she could not write. She had been absent a month—how much had happened in that month!

The man, with the excoriate surface of recollection

exposed, with the quick of remorse laid open, suddenly could not bear it. He threw a cloak about him and went rapidly down to the water-stairs.

The gondolier came running to the steps, catching up the long oar as he sprang to position.

"Whither, Excellence?" he asked.

A burst of music, borne on the air across roofs and up echoing canals, came faintly to Gordon from the far-away Square of St. Mark.

"To the Piazza," he said.

CHAPTER XXIX

TERESA'S AWAKENING

Teresa, meanwhile, had been facing her problem—how to warn the Englishman of his danger. During the slow hours while Gordon sat gazing into the distorted mirror of his own thought, she had traversed every causeway of risk, sounded every well of possibility. To a young girl of the higher class in Venice, a night trip, uncavaliered, held elements of grave peril. Discovery spelled lasting disgrace perhaps, certainly the anger of her father. All this she was ready to hazard. But beyond was the looming probability that she could not find the object of her search after all. However, it was a chance, and fear, with another sentiment that she did not analyze, impelled her to take it.

It was an easy task to win Tita, for he would have denied her nothing. To him, however, she told only a part of the truth—that she wished once to see the Piazza by night. Only an hour in the music and lights in his care, and then quick and safe return to the Palazzo Albrizzi. The house servants she could answer for. Who would be the wiser?

So, a little while after Gordon had been set down that night at the Molo, another gondola, lampless and with drawn *tenda*, stole swiftly to a side landing, and

Teresa, closely veiled, with Tita by her side, stepped into the square, beneath the flare of its flambeaux, into its currents of eddying maskers where the white *fazzioli* of the lower orders mingled with the rich costumes of patricians, all alike stung by the tarantula of gaiety: a flashing sea of motion and color surging endlessly beneath a sky alive with winged spots of gray and black—the countless pigeons that circled there undisturbed.

She had chosen the Piazza after much deliberation. It was the last night of the carnival, when all the world of Venice was on the streets. At the new Fenice Theater the latest opera of Rossini's was playing, and there was the ball of the Cavalchina, the final throb before the dropping of the pall of Lent. The sadness in Gordon's face and speech, she felt, had no part in these things. She felt instinctively that he would be spectator rather than actor, would choose the open air of the square rather than the indoors. The danger she feared for him would not seek him in a crowd; it would lurk in some silent byway and strike unseen. The thought made her tremble as she peered about her.

The center of the Piazza was a pool, fed and emptied by three streams of people: one flowing under the clock-tower with its blue and gold dial and bronze figures, one through the west entrance under the Bocca di Piazza, and still another rounding the Doges' Palace and meeting the thronged Riva. It was on the fringe of this second stream that she saw him, when the hour was almost ended. He was standing in the shadow of the pillars, watching, she thought, yet abstracted. With a whispered word to Tita she ran and touched the moveless figure on the arm.

Gordon turned instantly, and turning, spoke her name half-aloud. "Teresa!" The utterance was almost automatic, the lips, startled, voicing the word that was in his mind at the moment.

She thought he recognized her through the veil, and answered with a cry expressing at one time her relief at finding him, and a quick delight that thrilled her at the sound of her name on his lips. Many things had wrought together to produce this new miracle of gladness. The strangeness and romance of their first meeting, the tragedy of loneliness she had guessed in the scene at the shop, her dread and the physical risk entailed in her adventure of this night, all had combined with cunning alchemy. When he spoke she forgot to be surprised that he had called her by name, forgot that she did not know his, forgot everything save his presence and her errand.

He leaned forward, breathing deeply. It *was* she! She put her veil aside quickly—her eyes were like sapphire stones!—and told him hurriedly of the threat she had heard, of her dread, all in a rush of sentences incoherent and unstudied.

"And so you came to warn me?"

"He would do it, Signore! Ah, I saw his face when he said it. You must be guarded! You must not go abroad alone!"

His mind was busy. How much she had jeopardized to reach him in that fancied danger! She, in Venice, a young girl of noble rank, with no escort save a gondolier! Risk enough for her in any case; what an enduring calamity if she should be seen and recognized there, *with him!*

He led her back between the pillars, put out his hand and drew the veil again across her face, speaking gravely and gently:

"What you have done is a brave and noble thing; one I shall be glad of always. It was no less courageous, nor am I less grateful, though what you heard was a mistake. Little Pasquale is not dead. I spoke with the surgeon here less than a half-hour ago. He had just come from the piazzetta. The child will recover."

"Oh, thank God!" she breathed. She clasped her hands in very abandonment. "The blessed Virgin has heard me!"

His heart seemed suddenly to cease beating. The exclamation was a revelation far deeper than she divined. It was not joy at the life of the child that was deepest in it—it was something else: a great relief for *him!* He felt the blood tingle to his finger-tips. Only one emotion could speak in such an accent—only one!

With an uncontrollable impulse he leaned to her and clasped both her hands.

"You cared, Teresa," he said. "You risked so much —for me?"

He had spoken her name again. Again she felt the stab of that quivering spear of gladness. Her fingers fluttered in his.

"Yes—yes!" she whispered. The shouts, the music, the surge and laughter around, faded. She felt herself, unafraid, drifting on a sea of unplummetted depths.

A shock of fright brought her to herself. A man bent and dressed richly, with an affectation of youth, was passing, attended by a servant. As they approached, the keen-eyed servitor had pointed out Gordon. "That

is the evil Englishman, Excellence, of whom you have heard," he had said, and the old noble he led had set his keen eyes on the other with a chuckling relish.

Teresa, in the momentary pause they made, hardly repressed a cry, for that moment discovery seemed to her imminent. The old man was the Count Guiccioli—he who had leaned that afternoon from the palazzo balcony. Her pulses leaped to panic. She felt as if that sharp gaze must go through the veil, and pressed closer to Gordon.

But master and servant passed on, and her fear fainted out.

The man beside her had felt that quick pressure, and instinctively the touch of his arm reassured her, though he had not surmised her alarm. In that instant Gordon had been thinking like lightning. A temptation had sprung full-statured before him. In a flash he had read the dawning secret behind those eyes, the sweet unspoken things beneath those trembling lips crimson-soft as poppy leaves. To possess this heart for his own! Not to tell her who he was—not yet, when her purity would shrink—to nurture this budding regard with meetings like this, stolen from fate—to cherish it till it burst into flower for him, all engrossing, supreme! To make this love, fluttering to him unsought in the purlieus of his soul's despair, his solace and his sanctuary!

Coincidence grappled with him—a stealthy persuasion. In the crisis of his madness, when at Geneva he had cursed every good thing, her pictured face had sought him out to go with him. Into the nadir of his degradation there in Venice it had dropped like a fall-

ing star to call him to himself. Fate had led him to her in the woods of La Mira—had brought them both face to face at the shop in the piazzetta—and now had led her to him again here in the midst of the maskers. It was Kismet!

"I did not think there was more than one in all the world who would have done what you have to-night!" he said; "that would have cared if I lived or died! Why do you care?"

"Ah!" she answered hurriedly. "Is there one who would not? I do not know why. One does not reason of such things. One feels. I know I have cared—ever since that morning in the wood, when you found the book, when I gave you the prayer!"

He started, releasing her hands. *"Intercede and obtain for me of thy Son, our Lord, this grace!"* It seemed to come to him from the air, a demoniac echo to his desire. His breath choked him. She had prayed for him, purely, unselfishly. How should he requite? To-night, for his sake she had risked reputation. How did he purpose to repay? Would not the doing of this thing sink him a thousand black leagues below the sky she breathed? No matter how much she might come to love, could it recompense for what he would take away? Between those two lay a gulf as deep as that which stretched between cool water and a tortured Dives. What had he, George Gordon, dragging the chain and ball of a life sentence of despair, to do with her in her purity? He yearned for her because she *was* an immaculate thing; because she reincarnated for him all the white, unspotted ideals that he had thrown

away, that he longed to touch again. It was the devil tempting in the plea of an angel!

The mist fell from his eyes.

"Child!" he said. "What you have done to-night I can never repay. I shall remember it until I die. But I am not worthy of your thought—not worthy of a single throb of that heart of yours!"

She shook her head protesting.

"That cannot be true," she contended. "But if it were, Signore, one cannot say 'I will,' or 'I will not care' when one chooses." Her tone was naïve, and arch with a smiling, shy rebellion.

"Listen," he went on. "Do not think me jesting. What I say now I say because I must. I want you to promise me you will do something—something only for your good, I swear that!"

The smile faded from her lips, chilled by his earnestness.

"When you go from here you must forget that day at La Mira, forget that you came to-night—that we have ever met! Will you promise this?"

Her whole mind was a puzzled question now. Did he mean she should see him no more? Was he quitting Venice? The thought came like a pang. But to forget! Could she if she would? Why did he say it was for her good? A fear, formless and vague, ran through her.

"Why do you ask that, Signore?"

He turned his face away. It was so much harder than he thought. Must he tell her who he was? Could he not carry with him this one memory? Must he drink this cup of abnegation to its last dregs? The very kindness of silence would be cruelty for her! The seed fate

had sown, watered by mystery, would germinate in thorns! He must tell her—tell her now!

The press of maskers flooding the square, circled nearer, and she drew close. Her hand from under her cloak, found his own, suddenly fearful, feeling bold looks upon them.

"Bravo la Fornarina!" rose a jeering cry. An exclamation broke from Gordon's lips. A woman had burst from the throng like a beautiful embodied storm. Teresa shrank with a sob of dismay at the vision of flashing black eyes and dark hair streaming across jealous brows.

The crowd laughed.

"It is *l'Inglese maligno!*" said a voice.

Evading Gordon's arm, with a spring like a tiger's, the infuriate figure reached the girl, snatching at the veil.

"So he prefers you for his *donna!*" she sneered savagely. "Let us see, white face!"

The rent gauze dropped to the ground.

Sudden stillness fell. The jests and jeers hushed. Teresa stood motionless, her features frozen to sculpture; a passing cloud had slipped from the moon, and the silvery light above and behind her caught and tangled to a glistening aureole in her amber hair that fell in a mist about her shoulders. The illusion of a halo was instant and awe-inspiring. More than one, gazing, made the sign of the cross.

There was a cry—the *Fornarina* had flung herself on her knees on the flagging. A stir came from the crowd.

L'Inglese maligno! For the girl who stood so

moveless, the exclamation had blotted joy from the universe. It was as though all terrors gripped her bodily in a molten midnight. Dreams, faiths, prayer, and tender things unguessed, seemed to be shrivelling in her. She shivered, put out her hands and wavered on her feet.

"Dio!" she said in a low voice. "You, the wicked milord!"

Gordon, in aching misery, stretched out his arms toward her, though he saw her eyes were closed, with a broken word that was lost in a tumult, as a gigantic form plowed through the circle, a form from whose rush maskers fell away like tenpins.

It was Tita, enraged, bull-like. He gathered the crumpling, veilless figure in his arms, thrust his burly shoulder against the crowd and bore her quickly to the water-stairs where lay the dark gondola.

He set her on the cushions and plied the oar till it smoked in its socket.

The bright canals fled by—she had not moved. By darker passages he went now and very slowly, threading stagnant unlighted alleys. The way opened out, a swish of trailing tendrils swept across the oar—they were under a vine-trellised bridge. The lampless gondola crept along the wall, stole with sudden swiftness across a patch of moonbeams and darted into the shadowy water-gate.

Tita had thought the canal quite deserted. But beyond the moonlight another craft had been drowsing by. The old man under its *tenda* had been musing on the loveliness of a girl within those walls whom he should soon possess, and with her a dowry, set aside at

THE ILLUSION OF A HALO WAS INSTANT AND AWE-INSPIRING. *p. 215.*

her birth, which the waning fortunes of her family had preserved intact. He saw the dark bulk shoot into the gilded water-gate and peered out.

"What was that?" he demanded.

"A gondola, surely, Excellence."

Garden water-gates seldom swung in Venice at night. For a moment he watched. "Some servant's errand," he reflected, and leaned back on the cushions.

In the orchid-scented garden, Tita's brawny arms lifted Teresa out and set her upon the marble steps. He was thinking of the Englishman.

"Illustrissima!" he whispered. "Shall I kill him?"

Then something broke in Teresa's breast. She clasped the broad neck, sobbing:

"No, no, Tita! Dear Tita! Not that! I would rather die myself!"

CHAPTER XXX

THE PEACE OF PADRE SOMALIAN

All night Gordon's gondola floated over the dark lagoon. All night the star-silvered dip of the oar broke into ripples the glassy surface. All night Gordon sat silent, gazing out across the low islands that barred the sea.

Something had touched his life which, sooner met, might have made existence a boon. A woman's soul had roused him—but only to a rayless memory of what burned and rankled, as the touch of a hand wakes a prisoner from nightly lethargy to a sense of bolt and chain.

Lines from his poem which she loved—which had called forth her prayer—recurred to him:

"A light broke in upon my brain,—
It was the carol of a bird;
It ceased, and then it came again,
The sweetest song ear ever heard;
And mine was thankful till my eyes
Ran over with the glad surprise,
And they that moment could not see
I was the mate of misery;
But then by dull degrees came back
My senses to their wonted track,
I saw the dungeon walls and floor
Close slowly round me as before."

So she had come and gone, and his hands touched only walls of adamant, his ears heard only an echo rolling across blank infinities!

The moon sank. The great, linked lamps of the heavens burned brighter, faded at length, and a breath of sea-breeze, harbinger of the dawn, struck coldly on his cheek. Night became soft twilight, twilight grew to warm amethyst. Little milky clouds dappled the zenith, slowly suffused by a flush of rose that grew to vivid splendor gray-streaked, as the sun's climbing edge touched the humid horizon.

The occupant of the gondola stirred and looked about him. The air was full of mewing swallows, and a sandy island lay before him from which rose clumps of foliage and the dim outlines of brown stone walls, gilded by the growing light. The gondolier's voice broke the long silence:

"It is the Armenian monastery of Saint Lazarus, Excellence."

The island lay lapped in quiet. Not a sound or movement intrenched upon its peace. Only the swallows circled shrilly about slim bell-towers, lifting like fingers pointing silently. A narrow causeway through an encircling dike led to the wharf, and beyond, by a gate, to an orchard where gnarled fruit-trees sniffed the salt air. From a chimney at one side a strand of smoke sheered slenderly.

Gordon drew a long breath. "Put me ashore," he said.

The gondola shot alongside the tiny wharf, and he stepped on to its stone flags. He stood silent a moment, feeling the calm upon him like a tangible hand. Far to

the north, half a league's distance, glowing through the bluish winter haze, shone the towers and domes of Venice, a city of white and violet, vague and unsubstantial as a dream, a field of iris painted upon a cloud.

"Go back to the city."

The servant was startled. "And leave you, Excellence?"

"Yes, I shall send when I need you."

The boatman leaned anxiously on his oar. "When they question, Excellence?"

"Tell no one but Fletcher where I am. Say to him it is my wish that he shall not leave the palazzo."

He watched the gondola glide away over the lightening waters, till it was only a spot on the dimpling lagoon. He took a black phial from his pocket and threw it far out into the water. Then he turned his gaze and walked up the wharf toward the monastery, still soundless and asleep.

At the corner of the sea-wall, the stone had been hollowed with the chisel into a niche, in which, its face turned seaward, stood a small leaden image of the Virgin. He noted it curiously, with the same sensation of the unartificial he had felt at sight of the wooden shrine at La Mira. And yet with all its primitive simplicity, what a chasm between such a concrete embodiment of a personal guardianship and that agnostic altar his youth had erected "to the unknown God"!

He looked up and saw a figure near him.

A man of venerable look stood there, bareheaded, with a wide gray beard which swept upon his coarse dark robe. His eyes were deep and pleasant, and his

countenance spiritual, gracious and reserved. An open gate in the wall showed the way he had come.

For a moment neither spoke. The lucent gaze confronting him seemed to Gordon to possess a strange familiarity: it was the same expression of unworldly sincerity that had shone in those London days from Dallas' face.

"What do you seek, my son?"

Perhaps the friar had already had time to study the visitor. Perchance the clear scrutiny had read something beneath that cryptic look bent upon the shrine. What did he *not* seek, indeed!

When Gordon answered it was simply, in Italian as direct as the other's question.

"The peace of your walls and fields drew me, Padre. By your leave, I would rest a while here."

The friar's look had not wavered. Contemplation teaches one much. It was easy to read the lines of dissipation, of evil indulgence, that marked the white face before him; but the padre saw further to the soul-sickness beneath.

"We are Armenians, Signore," he proffered, "a community of students, who have poor entertainment; but to such as we have, the stranger is welcome. He who comes to us stays without question and fares forth again at his own will."

As he spoke, a bell's clear, chilly chime rose from somewhere within the walls. At the note the padre turned, bowed his knee before the leaden Virgin, and rising, with arm raised toward the lagoon, blessed the waters and the land. Then he held out his hand to Gordon.

"I am Padre Sukias Somalian," he said. "I will go and inform the prior. I will call you presently."

He disappeared through the wall-gate.

Gordon's eyes, following him, saw the worn motto deeply cut in the stone above it.

"O Solitudo, sola Beatitudo."

Was it solitude that had brought that look of utter peace to the friar's face? Or was it rather the belief that made him bow before the niche yonder?

His gaze wandered back to the shrine. Prayer to him was a fetish—a plastic rigmarole of symbols and formulæ—the modern evolution of the pre-Adamite, anthropomorphic superstition. It was far more than that to the friar. He knelt each day to that little leaden image. And before such an image she, Teresa, whose pure soul had been wounded last night, had laid that written petition.

A singular look stole to his face, half-quizzical, half-wistful. He took a leaf of paper from his pocket. He hesitated a moment, folding and unfolding it. He glanced toward the gate.

Then he went to the niche, stooped and lifted one of the loose flat stones that formed the base on which the image rested. He brushed away the sand with his hand, put the paper in the space and replaced the stone over it.

As he stood upright, a voice called to him from the gate. It was the padre, and he turned and followed him in.

CHAPTER XXXI

AT THE FEET OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS

George Gordon, at the monastery of San Lazzarro, looked out of washed eyes upon an altered condition. He was conscious of new strength and new weaknesses. The man, emerging from the slough of those months of lawless impulses and ungoverned recklessnesses, had found no gradual rejuvenation. After weeks of remorse, temptation had flung itself upon him full armed. The memory of a prayer had vanquished it. In that instant of moral resistance, conscience had been reborn. It was the sharp sword dividing forever past from present. The past of debauchery was henceforth impossible to him. What future was there? He had not only to bear unnumbed the despair he had tried to drown, but an anguish born of the newer yesterday.

The wholesome daily life of the friars, their homely occupations and studies, varied by little more than matutinal visits of fish-boats of the lagoon, aided him insensibly. His thought needed something craggy to break upon and he found it in the Armenian language which he studied under the tutelage of Padre Somalian, aiding the friar in turning into its rugged structure the sonorous periods of "Paradise Lost."

But from time to time, in this routine, a searing memory would recur and he would see in shifting *chiaroscuro,* the scene on the Piazza San Marco: the faces of the maskers, the slight, shrinking form of Teresa, the angry dark eyes of the *Fornarina,* a hand snatching at a veil—then the streaming moonlight tangling to a halo about a girl's shocked face so innocently touched with horror, a face that would always be distinct to him!

If he could have spared her the indignity of that one coarse scene! If he could only have told her himself, and gently! But even that, Fate had denied him—the dogging Nemesis that stalked him always! But for its decree, they had not met that night. He would have remained in her mind as she had seen him by the side of little Pasquale—a kindly shadow, a mystery beckoning her sympathy, then haply forgot. Now she would remember him always. Not as the wretched and misunderstood being for whom she had prayed at La Mira, but with shrinking and self-reproach, as a veritable agency of evil—the true *milord maligno,* who had bought her interest with the spurious coin of hypocrisy. So his tormented thought raced out along the barren grooves of surmise.

As he walked under the orchard's rosy roof, the prior called to him:

"A wedding party is coming to the south landing," he said. "Our monastery is fortunate this month. This is the third."

Gordon looked. There, rounding the sea-wall, was a procession of gondolas, decked superbly, the foremost draped wholly in white and trailing bright streamers

in the water, like some great queen bird leading a covey of soberer plumage. By the richness of the banners and embroidered *tenda,* it was the cortège of some noble bridal. As he gazed, the faint music of stringed instruments drifted across the walls.

Gathering closer the coarse brown monastery robe he had thrown about him, Gordon followed the padre through the garden to the further entrance, where the brethren, girdled and cowled, were drawn up, a benign row. The bride would wait among the ladies on the beach, since beyond that portal no woman's foot must go; the bridegroom would enter, to leave his gifts and to drink a glass of home-pressed violet-scented wine in the great hall.

Gordon paused a little way from the water-stairs and looked down over the low wall at the white gondola. One day, he mused, Teresa would marry—some noble like this no doubt, for she had rank and station—one whom she would love as she might have loved him. Perhaps she would celebrate her marriage in the Venetian way, come in a gondola procession maybe to this very monastery, never guessing that he once had been within it! In what corner of the world would he be then?

Under the edge of the *tenda* he could see the shimmering wedding-gown of the bride, cloth of gold heavy with seed pearls. The gentlemen had already entered the close. As he gazed, the gondola swung round and he caught a fleeting glimpse of her face.

"Teresa!" he gasped, and his hand clutched the wall. She—so soon! A sudden pain, not vague but definite, seized him. She had not cared, then. Her heart

had not suffered, after all! On that night, when she had swayed forward into the gondolier's arms, it had been only horror at her discovery, not a nearer grief! What for that quivering instant he had thought he read in her exclamation had not been there. Fool! To think his face could have drawn her for an hour! Doubly fool to sorrow for her hurt! Better so. She must not see him; no reminder of shame and affront should mar this day for her.

He turned, crossed the garden, opened the wall-gate and came out by the niched shrine upon the shore path which semi-circled the monastery.

A gust of self-raillery shook him. Inside, the friars were gravely drinking a health to the bride, in cups kept burnished for the purpose, made of pure gold. He, though only a guest, should be among them in robe and girdle to cheer these nuptials! He had drunk many a bumper in such costume in the old Newstead days, with Sheridan and Tom Moore!

The bitter laugh died on his lips. Why should he remember so well? In such a gabardine he had drunk the toast Annabel had heard, the night he had asked her to marry him. And he had drunk it from a death's-head! The emblem, truly enough, had typified the tragedy marriage was to be to him!

He leaned forward, resting his forehead against the mossed stone, as if its coolness might allay the fever that held him. Would marriage have meant such for him if the words that had bound him to Annabel had linked him to a heart like Teresa's, of fire and snow, of simple faith, of tenderness and charity? If he could have loved one like her!

He had no knowledge of how long he stood there. He was recalled by a voice from the path behind him—between him and the gate, his only way of escape—a voice that held him spellbound.

"Father, give me your blessing!"

With an overmastering sense of the fatality that had beckoned her to the lagoon path at just this moment to mistake him for one of the padres, he turned slowly. She was kneeling, the exquisite fabric of her dress sweeping the moist shingle, her eyes on the ground, awaiting the sign.

He reached out his hand with a hoarse cry:

"Not that! Teresa! It is I—I—who should kneel to you!"

The words broke from him at sight of her bent face, not as a bride's should be, but weary and listless. Underneath the cry was a quick thrill of triumph. Though she was that day another man's wife, yet she had suffered! But the thrill died in a pang of reproach. If she did care, better the harshest thought of him now!

She had sprung to her feet in passionate amaze.

"You!" she exclaimed; "ah, you!"

In the exclamation there was a great revulsion and greater joy. Her gaze swept his pallid features, his costume—her sick imagination had pictured him in scenes of ribaldry, with evil companions! She began to murmur broken sentences:

"I have wronged you! That night on the square—it was not the you that I had known! You had tried to leave that life behind—the past that had given you that name! You are not what they say,—not now! Not now!"

He stopped her with a gesture.

"It is I who have wronged you," he said in a voice hard from repression. "Do not judge me by this robe; it means less than nothing. I am here by the veriest accident. Not for penance or shriving."

For an instant she recoiled, instinct groping in the maze of doubt. What was he, erring angel or masquerading devil? It was the question she had cried to herself all this time, blindly, passionately, her judgment all astray—the query that silence had at last answered with the conviction in which her long-planned marriage had seemed as acceptable a fate as any. Now her soul, wavering anew, spoke its agony in a direct appeal:

"Tell me! tell me the truth!" she pleaded piteously. "I have suffered so since that night. I have not known —how could I know?—what to think. I believed what you said at La Mira, every word! And it is not your past I think of now; it is only what you were that very hour and since,—and what you are to-day. Was it only a play—to make me sorry? Did you pretend it all?"

"Teresa!" he entreated.

"You said that night that I must forget we had ever met. Did that mean you merely pitied and spared me? That you are still to be—all that Venice says?"

"It was what I *had* been that counted!"

"No, no!" she protested. "Can't you see that does not matter to me now? It is only what you were *then* that counts to me! Your voice, your eyes, what you said—you made me care! Was it all a lie?"

He felt his heart contract at this visible suffering whose root was so unselfish a desire. His resolve crumbled.

"Teresa," he said in a tone as strained as her own, "whatever of evil I have done, has not been since I have known you. You have waked something in me that would not sleep again. It was this you saw and heard and felt. I could not hide it. It has stayed with me ever since! It will always be with me now, whether I will or no. I *did* come here by accident. But I have stayed because the past—Venice and my life there—is hateful to me! It has been so since that morning at La Mira!"

"Oh!" she breathed, "then when you asked me for the prayer—you did not—you meant—"

"It was because it was almost the only unselfish and unworldly thing I had ever known. Because it was a thought for the scorned and unshriven; because of the very hurt it gave; because it was a prayer of yours—for me!"

While he spoke, a great gladness illumined her face. "Have you kept it?"

He turned from her instinctively to the shrine, his hand outstretched to raise the flat stone. But as suddenly he paused. He had placed it there in a half-sardonic mockery; not with the pure faith she would infer from the action. He could not stand in a false light before her.

He let the stone fall back into its place.

As he turned again to answer, he confronted two figures coming through the gateway a few paces off. One was an old man, his bent form dressed gaily. The other was Padre Somalian. The latter, in advance, had alone seen the lifted stone.

Both, however, saw the emotion in the two faces be-

fore them. The padre stood still; the other sprang forward, his posture instinct with an unhealthy passion, his piercing eyes on the pair with evil inquiry.

The attitude of ownership was unmistakable. Gordon felt his veins clog with ice. This senile *magnifico* Teresa's husband! This—a coerced Venetian mating of name, of rank, of lands alone—for her? The sight smote him painfully, yet with a strange, bitter comfort.

There was even more in the old noble's look than Gordon guessed: more than anger at her presence here, this young bride of his, apart from the gondolas. He had recognized the man in the monk's robe. His voice rose in a snarl:

"Unbaptized son of a dog! What is he doing on holy ground?" He pointed his stick at Gordon. "The abandoned of Venice! Has not his past fame penetrated here, Padre, that you lend him asylum? Call my gondoliers and I will have him flung into the lagoon!"

The friar stood transfixed, shocked and pained. Never since he had met Gordon on that very spot at sunrise, had he asked even his name. Suppose the stranger were all the other said. What difference should it make? The fixed habit of the monk answered:

"What he has been is of no question here."

The grandee sneered at the padre's answer.

"You left the gondola, to be sure, to pray," he said to Teresa, then turned to Gordon who waited in constrained quiet: "Wolf in sheep's clothing! Did you come for the same purpose?"

Teresa felt in Gordon's silence a control that stilled her own violence of feeling. Her husband saw her

glance and a maniacal suspicion darted like lava through his brain. If this meeting were planned, they had met before—she and this *maligno* whom he had seen on the Piazza San Marco. Two hectic spots sprang into his sallow cheeks. A woman's veiled form had stood by this man then! He remembered the derisive story with which the *caffès* had rung the next day. *That same night the unlighted gondola had crept through the water-gate into the garden of the Palazzo Albrizzi!*

He leaped forward and gripped Teresa's wrist with shaking fingers, as the padre opened his mouth to speak. He leaned and whispered words into her ear—words that, beside himself as he was, he did not choose that the friar should hear.

The hazard told. Her color faded. A startled look sped to her eyes. He knew that she had met Gordon at night on the square! She read monstrous conclusions in the gaze that held her. Innocent as that errand had been, he would never believe it! A terror struck her cold. This old man who possessed her, that instant ceased to be an object of tolerance and became an active horror, baleful, secretive and cruel. She stood still, trembling.

The padre had been nonplussed at the quick movement and its result. Gordon could not surmise what the whispered words had been, but at Teresa's paleness he felt his muscles grow rigid.

To her accuser her agitation meant but one thing. He released her wrist with a cracked laugh, distempered jealousy convulsing his features. He hissed one word at her—"Wanton!"

The syllables were live coals flung upon her breast. She cried out and put her hands to her ears as if to shut out the sound.

At that epithet and her cry, Gordon's countenance turned livid. His fingers hardened to steel. The air swam red. But the girl divined; she sprang before him and laid her fingers on his arm. His hands dropped to his sides; he remembered suddenly that his antagonist was aged, decrepit. What had he been about to do?

For one heart-beat Teresa held Gordon's glance. When she faced her distraught husband, her eyes were like blue-tempered metal. Those weeks of baffled quest had been slipping the leash of girlhood. That one word had left her all a woman. Her lips were set, and resentment had drenched her cheeks with vivid color.

"Signore," she said, "I would to God it were still yesterday!"

She turned, and went proudly down the path by which she had come.

The old man had not moved. Now he raised his stick and struck Gordon with it across the brow. A white mark sprang where it fell, but the other did not lift his hand. Then Teresa's husband, with an imprecation, spat on the ground at the friar's feet and followed her toward the gondolas.

The whole scene had been breathless and fate-like. To the padre, it was a flurry of hellish passions loosed from the pit. The storm past, still shocked from the violence of its impact, his mind wrestled with a doubt. His first glance at the faces of the man and the woman, as he emerged from the gate, had been full of suggestion. They had not seemed to spell guilt, yet could he

tell? What had been the husband's whispered charge? Was the bearing of the woman, which seemed to mirror innocence, really one of guile? The man here before him, accused of what specious crimes he could only guess! Why had he come to the monastery? Had there been, indeed, more than chance in this encounter at the shrine?

He looked at Gordon, but the latter, staring out with a gaze viewless and set across the lagoon, seemed unconscious of the scrutiny. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers!" That had been the monastery's creed. Aye, but if it should be entertaining an angel of evil unawares? He thought of the lifted stone—the man's hand had just now dropped it back into place at his approach. He remembered that when he called Gordon from the gate on the morning of his coming, he had seen him bending over the shrine. The fact seemed to disclose significance. Had this stranger used that holy emblem to further a clandestine and sinful tryst? Had he hidden an endearing message there for the wife to find to-day if he should be observed?

Lines of sternness sharpened the friar's features. He strode forward, caught up the stone and lifted the folded paper.

The sternness smoothed out as he read the simple penned sentences, and a singular look crept to his face. It was more than contrition; it was the self-accusatory sorrow of a mind to whom uncharity is a heinous sin before high Heaven.

He turned, flushing painfully. Gordon's back was still toward him.

Then the padre laid the paper gently back in its place,

reset the stone over it, and silently, with bowed head entered the gate.

That night there were two who did not close eye in the monastery of San Lazzarro. One was Padre Somalian, who prayed in penance. The other was a stranger who walked the stone floor of his chamber, the prey to an overmastering emotion.

That scene on the path, like a lightning flash in a dark night, had shown Gordon his own heart. He knew now that a force stronger even than his despair had been at work in him without his knowledge. A woman's face cried to him beyond all gainsaying. Teresa's voice sounded in every lurch of wind against the sea-wall—in every wave that beat like a passing bell upon the margin-stones.

Far, far deeper than the burn of the white welt on his forehead throbbed and thrilled a bitter-sweet misery. In spite of his desire, he had brought shame and agony upon her—and whether for good or ill, he loved her!

CHAPTER XXXII

THE RESTRAINING HAND

An east wind blew from the Adriatic. It churned the shadow lagoon to an ashen yeast of fury, hurled churlish waves against the sand-reef of the Lido and drove fleering rain-gusts over the lonely canals and deserted squares of Venice to drench the baffled and bedraggled pigeons huddled under the columns of the Doges' Palace. It beat down the early blossoms in the garden of the Palazzo Albrizzi till they lay broken and sodden about the arbor and the wet stone benches. It charged against the closed shutters of the Palazzo Mocenigo, where Fletcher, obedient though foreboding, awaited the return of his master. The sky was piled with dreary portents, clouds titanic, unmixed, like avalanches of gray falling cliffs, and beneath it Venice lay as ghostly and as gray, all its miracle hues gone lackluster, its glories palled, its whole face pallid and corpse-like.

In the old monastery of San Lazzarro, in the bare white-washed room used as a library, with wide windows fronting the sea, Gordon sat bending over a table. He had been trying to write, but could not for the thoughts that flocked between him and the paper.

They were thoughts of Teresa, of what he had innocently brought upon her. To save her pain he would himself have gone through immeasurable miseries, but no pang of his could lighten hers, or ward the jealous fury that might sting and embitter her life. Where was she? Behind some cold palazzo walls of Venice, suffering through him? He knew not even her name now. Should they never meet again?

She loved him. When and how she had crossed that indistinguishable frontier mattered nothing. The fact remained. When had he ever been loved before, he thought. Not Lady Caroline Lamb; hers was an aberrant fancy, an orchid bred of a hothouse life in London. Not Annabel, his wife; she had loved the commiseration of her world more than she loved him. Not Jane Clermont—he shuddered as he thought of her. For he knew that not for one ephemeral moment of that reckless companionship had a real love furnished extenuation.

"Now," he told himself, "I, who could not love when I might, may not when I can. Yet in spite of the black past that bars my life from such as Teresa's—I love her! In spite of all—though for both of us it is an impossible condition, impossible then since I was chained to a marriage in England, doubly impossible now since she is bound by a marriage here. I love her and she loves me! And our love can be only what the waves of hell were to Tantalus!"

He struck the littered sheets of paper with his hand, as a heavier gust of wet wind rattled the casement. "Darkness and despair!" he said aloud. "That is all my pen can paint now!"

A door opened and Padre Somalian entered.

The friar surveyed the scene of tempest from the window a moment in silence; then approached the table and sat down.

"You are at work, my son?" he inquired in English.

The tone was mild as a child's. Since his penance after that scene by the shrine, the eye of the padre had seen truer. But he had asked the man before him nothing.

"Only idle verses, Padre."

"Why idle?"

"Because they cannot express what I would have them."

The friar pondered, his fingers laced in his beard. To-day, in the dreariness of the elemental turmoil without, he longed intensely to touch some chord in this lonely man that would vibrate to confidence.

"What would you have them express?" he asked at length.

"A dream of mine last night, Padre."

A dream! Dreams were but the reflex of the waking mind. The friar felt suddenly nearer his goal.

"Will you tell it to me, my son?"

Gordon rose, went to the window and looked out as the other had done. His face was still turned seaward as he began:

"It was a dream of darkness. The sun was extinguished, and moon and stars went wandering into space. It was not the darkness of storm and night, Padre, for in them is movement. In my dream there was none. Without the sun, rivers and lakes lay stagnant. The waves were dead, the tides were in their graves. Ships

rotted on the sea till their masts fell. The very winds were withered. Darkness was everything—it was the universe! That was my dream."

"There is no darkness in God's universe," said Padre Somalian, after a pause. "It is only in the human heart. 'Men love darkness rather than light,' says the Book. Did men welcome it in your dream?"

"Morning came," went on Gordon; "came, and went, and came, but it was not day. Men forgot their hates and passions. They prayed only for light—but it did not come. They lived by watch-fires, and when their fuel was gone, they put the torch to their own homes to see one another's faces. Huts and palaces and thrones blazed for beacons. Whole cities burned at once. The forests were set on fire and their crackling trunks dropped and faded hour by hour. As the ember-flashes fell by fits on the men who watched them, their faces looked unearthly. Some lay down in the ashes and howled and hid their eyes. Some rested their chins on their clenched hands and smiled. Others hurried to and fro feeding the flames, looking up only to curse the sky —the pall of a past world. Wild birds fluttered on the baked ground, and brutes crawled tame and tremulous. Vipers hissed under foot and did not sting. They were killed for food. War was everywhere, for every meal was bought with blood, and each man sat apart sullenly, and gorged himself in the darkness. One thought ruled—death, quick and ignominious. Famine came. Men died and lay unburied. The starving devoured the starved. There was no human love left. There was only one unselfish, faithful thing. It was a dog, and he was faithful to a corpse. He had no food himself, but he

kept beasts and famished men at bay till he too died, licking his master's dead hand."

The words had fallen measuredly, deliberately, as if each aspect of the fearful picture, on the background of the tempest that gloomed out of doors, stood distinct.

There was a moment's silence. Then the friar asked: "Was that the dream's end?"

Gordon had turned from the window and picked up one of the written fragments. He read the last few lines aloud:

"The crowd was famished by degrees; but two
Of an enormous city did survive,
And they were enemies: they met beside
The dying embers of an altar-place
Where had been heaped a mass of holy things
For an unholy usage; they raked up,
And shivering, scraped with their cold skeleton hands
The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath
Blew for a little life, and made a flame
Which was a mockery; then they lifted up
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
Each other's aspects—saw, and shrieked, and died—
Even of their mutual hideousness they died,
Unknowing who he was upon whose brow
Despair had written 'Fiend.'"

There was no sound for a while when he finished. The padre sat motionless, his head bent. To him the picture drawn in those terse lines expressed a black inferno of human hopelessness into which he had never looked—the very apotheosis of the damned. He rose, came to where Gordon stood, and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"My son," he said gently, "there was one darkest

hour for the world. But it was in that hour that light and hope for men were born. Every man bears a cross of despair to his Calvary. But He who bore the heaviest saw beyond. What did He say? *Not my will, but Thine!"*

Gordon seemed to hear Annabel's voice repeating an old question: "What do you believe in that is good, I should like to know?" The friar had not asked questions; he had spoken as if voicing a faith common to them both and to all men.

Padre Somalian said no more. He left the room slowly.

The man standing by the window had made no reply. In the old days he would have smiled. Now his brow frowned haggardly. The age-old answer of the churchman! To what multitudinous human miseries it had proffered comfort! The sinless suffering and its promise. What an unostentatiously beautiful belief —if it were only true. *If it were only true!*

"What an advantage," he thought, "its possession gives the padre here! If it is true, he will have his reward hereafter; if there is no hereafter, he at the worst can be but with the infidel in his eternal sleep, having had the assistance of an exalted hope through life without subsequent disappointment. I have no horror of the awakening. In the midst of myriads of living and dead creations, why should I be anxious about an atom? It will not please the great 'I' that sowed the star-clusters to damn me for an unbelief I cannot help, to a worse perdition than that I walk through now—and shall walk through as long as I live!"

He spoke the last phrase half-aloud. "As long as I

live." Why should it be for long? Here—despair; there—no worse, if not a dreamless sleep!

"Why not?" he said to himself with grim humor. "I should many a good day have blown my brains out but for the recollection that it would pleasure Lady Noël,—and even then, if I could have been certain to haunt her!"

He turned and threw the window open and a scurry of rainy wind whirled the sheets of paper about the floor. He looked out and down. On that side of the island the beach had been only a narrow weedy ribbon soaked by every storm. Now the wind that had driven the sea into the pent lagoon, had piled it deep in the turbid shallows, and the wall fell sheer into the gray-green heave.

"Of what use is my life to any one in the world?" he argued calmly. "Who is there of all that have come nearest to me to whom I have not been a curse? I am bound to a wife who hates me. Years will make my memory a reproach to my child. Through me my enemies stabbed my sister. Shelley, my only comrade in that first year of ostracism, I hurt and disappointed. Teresa, whom I love, and have no right to love—what have I made her life! It is a fitting turn to such a page."

The inner shutter of the window fastened with a massive iron bolt. He drew the latter from its place, put it into his pocket, and buttoned his coat tightly. A sentence oddly recurred to him at the moment—a verse from a quaint old epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, unknown to the Vulgate, which, written in Armenian, he had found in the monastery library and translated to

torture his mind to attention: "Henceforth, no one can trouble me further; for I bear on my body this fetter." A seemly text for him it would be soon!

He approached the window.

There was a step behind him and Padre Somalian's voice startled him. "My son, a message for you."

Gordon turned heavily, the chill of that intercepted purpose cold upon him. He took the slender roll of parchment the friar handed him and opened it. It was officially ruled and engrossed—a baptismal certificate:

AT ST. GILES'-IN-THE-FIELDS, LONDON.

Christian Name.	Parents' Christian Names.	Surname.	Father's Residence.	Father's Rank.	By Whom.
Allegra.	Rt. Hon. George Gordon, (Reputed) by Jane.	Clermont.	Travelling on the Continent.	Peer.	Percy Bysshe Shelley.

The man who read snatched at the top of the paper. The date was March ninth, 1818. He felt a mist before his eyes. Almost two years ago, and he had not known! For two years he had had a daughter from whom he was not necessarily debarred, whom hatred in England could not touch. A thrill ran through him. He felt a recrudescence of all those tender impulses that had stirred in him when Ada was born. The mother's dislike or indifference had doubtless concealed the fact from him. And indeed, when in that time had he deserved otherwise? Why was he told now? Who had brought this record?

The padre, watching him curiously, saw the pang that shot across his face—the pang of the new remorseful conscience.

"The gentleman in the gondola," he said, "asked to see you."

"I will go down," Gordon answered. He closed the window, drew the iron bar from his coat and slipped it back between its staples.

"A wild day to have crossed the lagoon," the friar observed. "Stay—take this." He threw off the outer robe he wore and held it out. "It will shed the rain."

Gordon went rapidly through the wall-gate to the wharf where he had first set foot on the island. His own gondola, battered and tossing, lay there.

He stopped abruptly, for he recognized a figure standing by it, blue-coated, barcheaded, his long hair streaming in the wind. It was Shelley. His hand was outstretched, and with a quick movement Gordon strode forward and took it. A swift glance passed between the troubled, hollow eyes under the graying hair, and the clear, wild blue ones. Shelley's held no reproach, only comprehension.

"Fletcher told me where to find you," he said; "you must forgive him."

"Where is the child?"

"In the convent of Bagnacavallo, near Ravenna."

"And—Jane?"

"She is with us now in Pisa."

A question he could not ask hung on Gordon's lips as the other added:

"She is going to America with a troupe of players."

She no longer wished the child, then! Allegra

might be his. His, to care for, to teach to love him, to come in time to fill a part, maybe, of that void in his heart which had ached so constantly for Ada, further from him now than any distance measurable by leagues!

He looked again at the scrap of paper still in his hand, heedless of the wind that tore at his robe and lashed him with spume plucked from the tunnelled waves like spilt milk from a pan. Why had it come at just that moment to stay his leap into the hereafter? Was there, after all, deeper than its apparent fatalism, an obscure purpose in what man calls chance? Was this daughter, born out of the pale as he himself was beyond the pale, to give him the comfort all else conspired to deny? A slender hope grew tendril-like in him.

While Shelley waited, Gordon untied the girdle about his waist, stripped off the brown robe and, folding it, placed it out of the rain, in the niche where stood the leaden Virgin. From his pocket he took some bank-notes—all he had with him—laid them on top of the robe and weighted them carefully with fragments of rock.

Last he lifted the flat stone under which was Teresa's prayer. The paper was wet and blistered from the spray. He put it carefully in his pocket. Then with one backward glance at the monastery, he leaped into the gondola beside Shelley and signed to the gondolier to cast off.

For an hour the padre sat alone in the library, musing, wondering what manner of message had called that conflict of emotion to the other's face. As he rose at

length, the wind rattled the casement and called his attention.

He paused before it. "Why did he have the iron bolt?" he said to himself. "The window was open, too."

Standing, a thought came that made him start. He crossed himself and hastened out of the room.

A few moments later he was at the wharf. The gondola was gone, but by the shrine he found what Gordon had left.

He lifted the silver crucifix that hung at his girdle and his lips moved audibly:

"O Thou who quieted the tempest!" he prayed in his native tongue. "Thou didst send this racked heart to me in Thy good purpose. Have I failed in aught toward him? Did I, in my blindness, offer him less than Thy comfort? Grant in Thy will that I may once more minister to him and that when his storm shall calm, I may hold before his eyes this symbol of Thy passion and forgiveness!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE PASSING OF JANE CLERMONT

The storm-clouds were gone. An Italian spring was painting the hills with April artistry. Myrtle hedges had waked to childish green, lusty creepers swung callow tendrils, meadows were afire with the delicate, trembling anemone, and the rustling olive copses were a silver firmament of leaves. The immemorial pine woods that stretched about Ravenna, with the groves and rivers which Boccaccio's pen had made forever haunted, were bathed in sun and noisy with winged creatures.

Under the boughs of the balsamic forest, through the afternoon, from the convent of Bagnacavallo into Ravenna, a wagonette had been driven. It had carried a woman, young, dark-haired and of Spanish type—she who once had ruled the greenroom of Drury Lane. Time had made slight change in Jane Clermont's piquant beauty. A little deeper of tone and fuller of lip she was, perhaps a little colder of look; but her black eyes snapped and sparkled with all their old daring.

The convent road met the highway on the skirt of the town. At the juncture sat a prosperous osteria half surrounded by trellised arbors, blowsy with yellow snapdragons and gilly-flowers, and bustling all day long with the transient travel of tourists, to whom Ravenna

with its massive clusters of wide-eaved houses and dun-colored churches, its few streets of leisurely business, its foliaged squares and its colonnaded opera-house, were of less interest than the tomb of Dante. The inn held a commanding position. The post-road that passed its door curved southward toward Pisa; northward, it stretched to Venice. From both directions through Ravenna, lumbered diligence and chaise.

At the osteria the wagonette halted, made a detour and was finally drawn up in the shadow of the arbors where it was unobserved from the inn and yet had a screened view of both roads. For hours the vehicle sat there while the driver dozed, the occupant nesting her chin in her gloved hand and from time to time restlessly shifting her position.

Her patience was at last rewarded. Two men on horseback had paused at the cross-road. One was Shelley, astride the lank beast that had borne him from Pisa to Venice. The other was George Gordon.

"So he *did* come!" she muttered, peering through the screen of silver twigs. "I thought he would. I wonder what he will say when he finds I have changed my mind and settled Allegra's affairs another way."

She watched the pair as they parted. The dropping sun danced in tiny flashes from the brass buttons on Shelley's blue coat. "Poor philosopher!" she soliloquized with pitying tolerance. "You are going back to your humdrum Pisa, your books and your Mary. The world attracts you no more now with your money than it did when we found you in the debtors' prison. Well, every one to his taste! I wonder why you always troubled yourself about George Gordon."

Her eyes narrowed as they lingered on the other figure, turning alone into the forest road from which her wagonette had come.

"I would like to see your lordship's face when you get there!" she said half aloud. "My authority is the convent's now. You may take your daughter—*if you can!*"

Not till both riders were out of sight did the wagonette draw into the highway.

Jane Clermont rode on, humming an air, looking curiously at the various vehicles that passed her on the smooth, well-travelled road, thinking with triumph of the man she had seen riding to Bagnacavallo. She had guessed the object of Shelley's trip to Venice, but the knowledge had not at first stirred her natural and self-absorbed indifference. It was a malicious afterthought, a gratuitous spice of venom springing more from an instinctive maleficence than from any deeper umbrage, that had inspired that parting visit to the convent. The impulse that had led her to assure herself of Gordon's fruitless journey was distinctly feline.

A mile from the town her reflections were abruptly broken. She spoke to the driver and he stopped.

A sweating horse was approaching. Its trappings were of an ostentatious gaudiness. The face of the man it carried was swarthy and mustachioed and his bearing had the effect of flamboyant and disordered braggadocio.

"Trevanion!" she exclaimed, with an accent of surprise. She had not seen him for two years. As she watched, her face showed a certain amusement.

He would possibly have passed her by, for his gaze was set straight ahead, but when he came opposite, she leaned from the carriage and spoke his name.

His horse halted instantly; a hot red leaped into his oriental cheeks, a look fierce and painful into his eyes. He sat still, looking at her without a word.

"I thought you were in England," he said at length.

"So I was till last fall. Since, I've been at Pisa with the Shelleys. But I find the continent precious dull. I see you haven't been caught yet for deserting from the navy. Is that why you don't stay in London? Tell me," she asked suddenly; "where is George Gordon now?"

"In Venice."

"Really!" Her voice had a kind of measured mockery that did not cloak its satire. "And yet I hear of his doings in many other places—Lucca, Bologna, all the post-towns. From the descriptions, I judge he has changed, not only in looks but in habits."

He winced and made no reply.

"Pshaw!" she said, scorn suddenly showing. "Don't you think I guessed? Gulling a few travellers in the post-houses with a brawling impersonation! Suppose a million should think George Gordon the tasteless roustabout ruffian you make him out? What do you gain? One of these days, some tourist friend of his—Mr. Hobhouse, for instance; he used to be a great traveller—will put a sharp end to your play."

"I'll risk that!" he threw her. "And I'd risk more!"

"How you hate him!"

He laughed—a hard, dare-devil sound. "Haven't I cause enough?"

"Not so far as I know. But I wish you luck, if the game pleases you. It's nothing to me."

"It was something to you, once," he said, "wasn't it?"

She smiled amusedly. "How tragic you always were! He was never more to me than that"—she snapped her fingers. "Constancy is too heavy a rôle. I always preferred lighter parts. I am going to play in America. Why don't you turn stroller and act to some purpose? Why not try New York?"

While she spoke her tone had changed. It had become softer, more musical. Her lashes drooped with well-gauged coquetry.

"Look," she said, in a lower key; "am I as handsome as I used to be at Drury Lane—when you said you'd like to see the world with me?"

A smoldering fire kindled in his eyes as he gazed at her. He half leaned from the saddle—half put out his hand.

But at his movement she dropped the mask. She laughed in open scorn. "A fig for your hate!" she exclaimed contemptuously. "I have no liking for George Gordon, but he was never a sneak at any rate!"

The man to whom she spoke struck savage spurs to his horse. As he wheeled, she swept him a curtsy from the carriage seat. "Joy to your task!" she cried, and drove on with her lips curled.

"He doesn't know Gordon is near Ravenna," she thought presently. "If he gives one of his free entertainments at the inn to-night, there may be an interesting meeting. What a pity I shall miss it!" and she laughed.

A little further on, the carriage turned to the westward toward the Swiss frontier.

As Trevanion reined the animal he bestrode to its haunches at the porch of the osteria, where Jane Cler-

mont's wagonette had waited, he looked back along the road with a muttered curse. Then he kicked a sleeping hound from the step and went in with an assumed limp and a swagger.

Two hours later, when the early dusk had fallen, and the ghostly disk that had hung all day in the sky was yellowing above the olive trees, George Gordon flung his bridle wearily to a groom at the inn. His face was set and thwarted. He had been to the convent, to find that a wall had suddenly reared between him and the possession of his child. To surmount this would mean publicity, an appeal to British authority, red tape, a million Italian delays,—perhaps failure then.

As he stood, listening to the stir of the inn he was about to enter, a low voice suddenly spoke from the shadow of a hedge: "Excellence!"

Turning he recognized the huge frame of the gondolier who had borne Teresa from the Piazza San Marco on the night she had come to warn him. His heart leaped into his throat. Had the man followed him from Venice? Did he bring a message from her?

"Excellence! I heard in the town that you were at the inn. I would like speech with you, but I must not be seen. Will you follow me?"

Even in his surprise, Gordon felt an instant's wonder. He himself had not yet entered the osteria. How had the other heard of his presence? The wonder, however, was lost in the thought of Teresa.

He turned from the inn and followed the figure silently through the falling shadows.

CHAPTER XXXIV

TITA INTERVENES

Under the trees, as Gordon listened to the gondolier, the night grew deeper. The moonlight that mellowed over the pine forests spectrally outspread, the burnished river and the town before them, misted each hedge and tree with silver. A troubadour nightingale bubbled in the middle distance from some palazzo garden and from the nearer osteria came sounds of bustle. Through all breathed the intimate soft wind of the south bearing the smell of lime-blossoms and of sleeping bean-fields.

Wonder at Tita's appearance had melted into a great wave of gladness that swept him at the sudden knowledge that she, Teresa, was there in Ravenna near him, mistress of Casa Guiccioli, whose very portal he had passed that afternoon. But the joy had died speedily; thereafter every word had seemed to burn itself into his heart.

"If he hated her, why did he wish to make her his contessa? Tell me that, Excellence! It has been so all these weeks, ever since her wedding. Sometimes I have heard him sneer at her—always about you, Excellence—how he knew she ever saw you I cannot tell! His servants go spying—spying, always when she is out of the casa."

The man who listened turned his head with a movement of physical pain, as Tita went on, resentfully:

"And she is a Gamba, born to be a great lady! If she left him, he would bring her back, unless she went from Italy. And who is to help her do that? Her brother is in another land. Her father is sick and she will not tell him anything. There is none but me in Casa Guiccioli who does not serve the signore too well! I thought—" he finished, twisting his red cap in his great fingers, "I thought—if I told you—you would take her away from him, to your own country, maybe."

Gordon almost smiled in his anguish. To the simple soul of this loyal servant, on whom conventional morals sat with Italian lightness, here was an uncomplex solution! Turn household highwayman and fly from the states of the Church to enjoy the plunder! And of all places—to England! Open a new domestic chapter in some provincial British country-side as "Mr. Smith," perhaps, "a worthy retired merchant of Lima!" The bitter humor couched in the fancy made sharper his pang of utter impotence. Italy was not England, he thought grimly. In that very difference had lain shipwreck for them both. Teresa could not leave her husband openly, as Annabel had left him! The Church of Rome knew no divorce, and inside its bond only a papal decree could give her the right to live apart from her husband under her own father's roof.

Tita's voice spoke again, eagerly: "You will come, Excellence? The signore is from Ravenna now, at one of his estates in Romagna—you can see her! None shall know, if you come with me. You will, Excellence?"

To see her again! Gordon had not realized how much

it meant till to-night, when the possibility found him quivering from his disappointment at the convent. A stolen hour with her! Why not? Yet—discovery. Her husband's servants, spies upon her every moment! To steal secretly to her thus unbidden and perhaps crowd upon her a worse catastrophe than that at San Lazzarro!

He shook his head. "No. Not unless she knows I am here and bids me come."

"I will go and tell her, Excellence!"

"Tell her I did not know she was in Ravenna, but that—that I would die to serve her. Say that!"

"You will wait here, Excellence?"

"Yes."

Tita swung round and disappeared.

It seemed an immeasurable time that Gordon waited, striding fiercely up and down, listening to every sound. At the inn a late diligence had unloaded its contingent of chattering tourists for the night. He could hear phrases spoken in English. The words bore a myriad-voiced suggestion, yet how little their appeal meant to him at that moment! All England, save for Ada, was less to him then than a single house there in Ravenna—and a convent buried in the forest under that moon. On such another perfect day and amber night, he thought, he had found Teresa's miniature and had fled with Jane Clermont. Now substance and shadow had replaced one another. To-day Jane had touched his life vaguely and painfully in passing from it! Teresa was the sole reality. What would she say? What word would Tita bring?

Long as it seemed, it was in fact less than an hour before the gondolier stood again before him.

Ten minutes later they were in the streets of the town, avoiding its lighted thoroughfares, walking swiftly, Tita in the lead. At length, threading a lane between walled gardens flanking great houses whose fronts frowned on wider avenues, they stood before a columned gate. This Gordon's guide unlocked.

"I will watch here," he said. "You will not tell her I came to you first of my own thought, Excellence?" he added anxiously.

"I will not tell her," answered Gordon.

He entered with a loudly beating heart.

CHAPTER XXXV.

IN THE CASA GARDEN

The close was still—only the flutter of moths and the plash of a fountain tinkling wetly. Here and there in the deeper shade of cloistral walks, the moonlight, falling through patches of young leaves, flecked bloodless bacchantes and bronze Tritons nestling palely in shrub tangles of mimosa. This was all Gordon distinguished at first as he moved, his hands before him, his feet feeling their way on the cool sward.

Suddenly a low breath seemed to pierce the stillness. A sense of nearness rushed upon him. His arm, outstretched, touched something yielding.

"Teresa!" he cried, and his hands found hers and drew her close to him. In that first moment of silence he was keenly conscious of her breath against his cheek, hurried and warm.

"I know—I know," he said in a choked voice. "Tita told me all. I would give my body inch by inch, my blood drop by drop to give back to your life what I have taken from it!"

She shook her head. "You have taken nothing from it. Before that night on the square it held nothing—I have learned that since."

She was feeling a sense of exaltation. Since the day

at San Lazzarro she had never expected to see him again. To her he had been a glorious spirit, struggling for lost foothold on the causeways of redemption. In her mental picture he had stood always as she had seen him on the monastery path, pale, clad in a monk's coarse robe, the vesture of earthly penance. This picture had blotted out his past, whatever it had been, whatever of rumor was true or false, whatever she may for a time have believed. Every word he had spoken remained a living iterate memory. And the thought that her hand had drawn him to his better self had filled her with a painful ecstasy.

"Teresa," he said unsteadily, "I long ago forfeited every right to hope and happiness. And if this were not true, by a tie that holds me, and by a bond you believe in, I have still no right to stand here now. But fate drew me here to-day—as it drew me to you that morning at La Mira. It is stronger than I—stronger than us both. Yet I have brought you nothing but misery!"

"You have brought me much more than that," she interrupted. "I knew nothing of life when I met you. I have learned it now as you must have known it to write as you have. I know that it is vaster than I ever dreamed—more sorrowful, but sweeter, too."

A stone bench showed near, wound with moonbeams, and she sat down, making room beside her. In the white light she seemed unreal—a fantasy in wild-rose brocade. A chain of dull gold girdled her russet hair, dropping a single emerald to quiver and sparkle on her forehead. Her face was pale, but with a shadowy something born of those weeks.

What he saw there was awakened self-reliance and mettle, the birthright of clean inheritance. The wedding gondola that had borne a girl to San Lazzarro had carried back a woman, rebellious, agonized, flushed to every nerve. She had opposed a woman's pride to the hatred that otherwise would have made the ensuing time a slow unrolling nightmare; had taken her place passively as mistress of the gloomy casa with its atmosphere of cold grandeur and miserliness, thankful that its host was niggardly of entertainment, enduring as best she might the petty persecution with which the old count surrounded her. His anger, soured by the acid sponge of jealousy, had fed itself daily with this baiting. He believed she had come smirched from the very altar to his name and place. Yet he had no proof, and to make the scandal public—to put her away—would have seared his pride, laid him open to the wrath of her kin, brought her brother back to Italy to avenge the slight upon their house, and most of all to be dreaded, would have necessitated the repayment of her dowry. A slow and secret satisfaction was all he had, and under it her spirit had galled and chafed him. In this strait she had had no confidant, for her father, aging rapidly and failing, she would not sadden, and whenever he drove to Casa Guiccioli from his villa, some miles from the town,—sole relic of his wasted properties,—had striven to conceal all evidence of unhappiness. Even when she had determined on a momentous step—a secret appeal to the papal court for such a measure of freedom as was possible—she had determined not to tell him yet. Grief and repression had called to the surface the latent capabilities which in the girl had been but promises, and these

COUNTESS TERESA.

spoke now to Gordon in a beauty strong, eager and far-divining.

"What I have known of life is not its sweets," he answered in bitterness. "I have gathered its poison-flowers, and their perfume clings to the life I live now."

"But it *will* not be so," she said earnestly. "I believe more than you told me at La Mira—when you said it had been one of your faults that you had never justified yourself. You were never all they said. Something tells me that. If you did evil, it was not because you chose it or took pleasure in it. For a while I doubted everything, but that day at San Lazzarro, when I saw you—the moment you spoke—it came back to me. No matter what I might think or hear again, in my heart I should always believe that now!"

He put out his hand, a gesture of hopelessness and protest. His mind was crying out against the twin implacables, Time and Space. If man could but push back the Now to Then, enweave the There and Here! If in such a re-formed universe, He and She might this hour be standing—no irrevocable past, only the new Now! What might not life yield up for him, of its burgeoning, not of its corruption, its hope, not of its despair!

"That day!" he repeated. "I saw you in the gondola. I would have spared you that meeting."

"Yet that was what told me. If I had not seen you there—" She paused.

The chains of his repression clung about him like the load of broken wings. The knowledge that had come as he walked the floor of his monastery room with the burn of a blow on his forehead, had spelled abnegation.

She must never know the secret he carried—must in time forget her own. Once out, he could never shackle it again. He completed her sentence:

"You would have forgotten the sooner."

"I should never have forgotten," she said softly.

He was silent. He dared not look at her face, but he saw her hands, outstretched, clasping her knee.

Presently—he could not guess the dear longing for denial that made her tone shake now!—she said:

"Tita told me that—when you came to Ravenna—you had not known—"

He rose to his feet, feeling the chains weakening, the barriers of all that had lain unspoken, yet not unfelt, burning away.

"It was true," he answered, confronting her. "I did not know it. But if I *had* known all I know to-night, I would have crossed seas and mountains to come to you! Now that I have seen you—what can I do? Teresa! Teresa!"

The exclamation held trenchant pain—something else, too, that for the life of him he could not repress. It pierced her with a darting rapture.

Since that hour at the monastery, with its pang and its reassurance, as she felt budding those new, mysterious flowers of faith and heart experience, she had felt a deeper unguessed want. Over and over she had repeated to herself the last words he had said before that painful interruption: "Because it was a prayer of *yours* for *me*." Her soul had been full of a vague, unphrased yearning for all the meanings that might lie unexpressed in the coupling of those two words. So now,

as she heard him speak her name in that shaken accent, her heart thrilled.

"Ah," she breathed, "then you care—so much?"

His fingers clenched. He was torn with two emotions: self-abasement, and a hungry desire, lashed by propinquity, to take her in his arms, to defy vow and present, be the consequence what it might. There came upon him again the feeling that had gripped him when she stood with him among the circling maskers, violet-eyed, lilac-veined, bright with new impulses, passionate and lovely. He leaned toward her. If she but knew how he cared!

A sound startled them both. Her hand grasped his with apprehensive fingers as she listened. "Look! There beyond the hedge. A shadow moved."

He looked. Only an acacia stirred in the light air.

"It is nothing," he reassured her. "Tita is at the gate."

"Oh," she said fearfully, "I should not have said come. There is risk for you here."

"What would I not have risked?"

"Listen!"

Another sound came to both now, the pounding of horses' hoofs, borne over the roof from the street—the rumble of heavy coach wheels. It ceased all at once, and lights sprang into windows across the shrubbery.

She came to her feet as Tita hurried toward them. "It is the signore," warned the gondolier.

"*Dio mio!*" she whispered. "Go—go quickly!"

He caught her hands. "If only I could help you, serve you!"

"You can," she said hurriedly. "I have a letter on

which much depends—for the Contessa Albrizzi at Venice. I cannot trust a messenger."

"It shall start to-night."

"It is in my room. I will send it after you by Tita. Ah—hasten!"

He bent and touched his lips to a curl that had blown like litten gold against her shoulder. Her eyes met his an instant in fluttering, happy confusion. Then, as he followed Tita quickly to the gate, she turned and ran toward the house.

She had not seen a man, crouched in the shadow of a hedge, who had hurried within doors to greet the master of the casa so unexpectedly returned. She did not see the rage that colored her husband's shrunken cheeks in his chamber as Paolo, his Corsican secretary, imparted to him two pieces of information: the presence of the stranger in the garden and the arrival that afternoon at the osteria of him Venice called "the wicked milord."

The old count pondered, with shaking fingers. He hated the Englishman of Venice; hated him for robbing him of the youth and beauty he had gloated over, for the arrow to his pride—with a hatred that had settled deeper each day, fanatical and demented. The story of the garden trespasser inspired now an unholy craving for reprisal, unformed and but half conceived. He summoned his secretary.

In a few moments more—a half-hour after Teresa's letter had started on its way to the inn—his coach, with its six white horses, bearing Paolo, and followed by four of the casa servants afoot, was being driven thither by a roundabout course.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW

The osteria, as Gordon approached, seemed gurgling with hilarity. At its side the huge unhitched diligence yawned, a dark bulk waiting for the morrow's journey. Some of the passengers it had carried were gathered on the porch before the open windows, listening, with postures that indicated a more than ordinary curiosity and interest, to sounds from the tap-room. There were women's forms among them.

Tourists were little to Gordon's liking. They had bombarded his balcony at Diodati with spy-glasses, had ambushed him at Venice when he went to opera or *ridotto*. To him they stood for the insatiable taboo of public disesteem—the chuckling fetishism that mocked him still from beyond blue water. He skirted the inn in the shade of the cypresses and passed to an arbor which the angle of the building screened from the group.

On its edge he paused and gazed out over the fields and further forest asleep. With what bitterness he had ridden scarce three hours before from those woods!

Now it was shot through with an arrow of cardinal joy whose very rankle was a painful delight. In the jar of conflicting sensations he had not reasoned or presaged; he could only feel.

What was the import of Teresa's letter, he wondered. Much depended on it, she had said in that agitated moment. A thought flitted to him. The Contessa Albrizzi had lived much in Rome—was, he remembered, cousin to a cardinal. Could this message be an appeal for deliverance from an impossible position? Might Teresa yet be free; not from her marriage bond, but at least from this hourly torture in Casa Guiccioli? With the quick feeling of relief for her, wound a sharp sense of personal vantage. For him that would mean the right to see her often and unopposed. Yet, he argued instantly with self-reproach, was not this the sole right he could not possess, then or ever? What would it be but tempting her love on and on, only to leave it naked and ashamed at last?

A gust of noise rose behind him. It issued from a window opening out of the tap-room into the arbor. On the heels of the sound he caught shattered comments from the peering group on the front porch—feminine voices speaking English:

"I've always wanted to see him. We watched three whole days in Venice. How young he looks!"

"What a monster! And to think he is a peer and once wrote poetry. There! See—he's looking this way!"

Gordon started and half turned, but he had not been observed; the angle of the wall hid him effectually.

Just then a single vociferate voice rose to dominant

speech in the room—a reckless, ribald utterance like one thickened with liquor. It conveyed an invitation to everybody within hearing to share its owner's punch. Laughter followed, and from outside a flutter of withdrawing skirts and a masculine exclamation of affront.

With a puzzled wonder the man in the arbor listened, while the voice within lifted in an uncertain song:

"Fare thee well! and if forever,
Still forever fare thee well;
Even though unforgiving, never
'Gainst thee shall my heart rebel."

"Shameless brute!" came from the porch. "I wouldn't have believed it!"

Smothering a fierce ejaculation, Gordon strode to the window and gazed into the room. The singer broke off with a laugh:

"That's the song I always warble, gentlemen, when I'm in my cups. I wrote it to my wife—when I was a Bond Street lounger, a London *cicisbeo* and fan-carrier to a woman."

The man who stared across the sill with a painful fascination was witnessing a glaring, vulgar travesty of himself. Not the George Gordon he was, or, indeed, had ever been, but the George Gordon the world believed him; the abandoned profligate of wassail and blackguardism, whom tourists boasted of having seen, and of whom an eleventh commandment had been promulgated for all British womankind—not to read his books. And this counterpart was being played by a man whose Moorish, theatric face he knew—a man he had flung from his path at Geneva, when he stood with

Jane Clermont by the margin of the lake on the night he and she had fled together. A man who hated him!

The clever effrontery of the deception showed how deep was that hatred. Gordon understood now how Tita had heard of his presence at the osteria before he had entered it. The *farceur* inside did not know the man he impersonated was in Ravenna to-night. This, then, was not the only caravansary at which the burlesque had been played. Nor were these tourists smirking in the tap-room, or listening open-mouthed outside to the clumsy farrago, the only ones to return to England with clacking tongues. This was how the London papers had bristled with garbled inventions! This scene was only a step in a consistent plan to blacken his name anew throughout the highways of continental travel!

A guttural whisper escaped his lips. It would be another bar between him and possession of Allegra. And Teresa? If these post-house tales reached her ears! A crimson mist grew before his eyes.

A more reckless and profane emphasis had come now to the carouser within. He had risen and approached the porch window, simulating as he walked an awkward limp.

"Take a greeting to England, you globe-trotters! Greeting from Venice, the sea-Sodom, to London! Hell is not paved with its good intentions. Slabs of lava, with its parsons' damned souls for cement, make a better causeway for Satan's *corso!*"

Again he turned to his fellows in the tap-room: "When I shuffle off it will be like the rascals to dump

me into Westminster Abbey. If they do, I'll save them the trouble of the epitaph. I've written it myself:

"George Gordon lies here, peer of Nottinghamshire,
Wed, parted and banished inside of a year.
The marriage he made, being too much for one,
He could not carry off—so he's now *carri-on!*"

"Westminster Abbey!" said a man's bass in disgust.

Gordon's left hand reached and grasped the sill. His face was convulsed. His right hand went to his breast pocket.

At that instant, from behind him, a touch fell on his arm and stayed it. "A letter, Excellence."

He turned with a long, shuddering breath, and took what Tita handed him.

"I understand, Tita," he answered, with an effort. The other nodded and disappeared.

For a moment Gordon stood motionless. Then he passed from the arbor, through the hedges, to the spot whither the gondolier had led him two hours before. He sat down on the turf and buried his face in his hands.

He had scarcely known what shapeless lurid thing had leaped up in his soul as he gazed through the window, but the touch on his arm had told him. For the moment the pressure had seemed Teresa's hand, as he had felt it on the path at San Lazzarro, when the same red mist had swum before his eyes. Then it had roused a swift sense of shame; now the memory did more. The man yonder he had injured. There had been a deed of shame and dastard cowardice years before in Greece—yet what had he to do with the boy's act? By what

right had he, that night in Geneva, judged the other's motive toward Jane Clermont? Had his own been so pure a one then? Because of a fancied wrong, Trevanion had dogged him to Switzerland. Because of a real one he dogged him now.

After a time Gordon raised his head and stared out into the moonlight. "It is past," he said aloud and with composure. "It shall never tempt me again! What comes to me thus I myself have beckoned. I will not try to avert it by vengeance. The Great Mechanism that mixed the elements in me to make me what I am, shall have its way!"

He rose slowly and walked back toward the osteria. A groom was washing out the empty diligence. He sent him for his horse, and in a few moments was in the saddle, riding toward Venice through the silent, glimmering streets of Ravenna.

A new, nascent tenderness was in him. He was riding from her, the one woman he loved—to see her when and where? Should he ever see her again? She might have hope of relief in the letter he carried, but who could tell if it would succeed? And in the meantime she was alone, as she had been alone before.

He rode on, his chin sunk on his breast, scarcely observing a coach with six white horses, that passed him, driven in the opposite direction.

CHAPTER XXXVII

TREVANION FINDS AN ALLY

Trevanion, the drunkenness slipped from his face and the irksome limp discarded, came from the osteria door. His audience dwindled, he was minded for fresh air and a stroll. Behind the red glow of his segar his dark face wore a smile.

Just at the fringe of the foliage two stolid figures in servant's livery stepped before him. Startled, he drew back. Two others stood behind him. He looked from side to side, pale with sudden anticipation, his lips drawn back like a lynx at bay. He was weaponless.

A fifth figure joined the circle that hemmed him—Paolo, suave, smiling, Corsican.

"Magnificence!" he said, in respectful Italian, "I bear the salutations of a gentleman of Ravenna who begs your presence at his house to-night." Without waiting answer, he called softly, and a coach with six white horses drew slowly from the shadow.

For an instant Trevanion smiled in grim humor, half deceived. A simultaneous movement of the four in livery, however, recalled his distrust.

"Are these his *bravos?*" he inquired in surly defiance.

"His servants, Magnificence!"

"Carry my excuses then—and bid him mend the manner of his invitations."

"I should regret to have to convey such a message from the milord." Paolo opened the coach door as he spoke. The inference was obvious.

Trevanion glanced swiftly over his shoulder toward the still hostelry. His first sound of alarm might easily be throttled. At any rate, he reflected, these were not the middle ages. To the owner of this equipage he was an English lord, and lords were not kidnapped and stilettoed, even in Italy. Some wealthy Ravennese, perhaps, not openly to flout public disapproval, chose thus to gratify his curiosity. Anticipating refusal, he had taken this method of urbane constraint. Well, perforce, he would see the adventure through! He shrugged his shoulders and entered the coach.

Paolo seated himself, and the horses started at a swinging trot. Through the windows Trevanion could discern the forms of the men-servants running alongside. He sat silent, his companion vouchsafing no remark, till the carriage stopped and they alighted at the open portal of a massive structure fronting the paved street. It was Casa Guiccioli.

The Corsican led the way in and the servants disappeared. With a word, Paolo also vanished, and the man so strangely introduced gazed about him.

The hall was walled with an arras tapestry of faded antique richness, hung with uncouth weapons. Opposite ascended a broad, dimly lighted stairway holding niches of tarnished armor. Wealth with penuriousness showed everywhere. Could this whimsical duress be the audacity of some self-willed dama, weary of her *cavaliere*

servente and scheming thus to gain a romantic *tête-à-tête* with the famed and defamed personage he had caricatured that day? Trevanion stole softly to the arras, wrenched a Malay kriss from a clump of arms, and slipped it under his coat.

A moment later his guide reappeared. Up the stair, along a tiled and gilded hall, he followed him to a wide *stanza*. A door led from this at which Paolo knocked.

As it opened, the compelled guest caught a glimpse of the interior, set with mirrors and carven furniture, panelled and ornate with the delicate traceries of brush and chisel. In the room stood two figures: a man bent from age, his face blazing with the watch-fires of an unbalanced purpose, and a woman, young, lovely, distraught. She wore a dressing-gown, and her gold hair fell uncaught about her shoulders, as though she had been summoned in haste to a painful audience. Her eyes, on the man, were fixed in an expression of fearful wonder. One hand was pressed hard against her heart. Trevanion had never seen either before; what did they want with him?

"Your guest," announced Paolo on the threshold.

"What do you mean to do?" cried the girl in frantic fear. "He is a noble of England! You dare not harm him!"

"I am a noble of Romagna!" grated the old man.

It was the *real* George Gordon they expected—not he! Trevanion was smiling as Paolo spoke to him. With a hand on the blade he concealed he strode forward, past him, into the room.

"Your servant, Signore," said he, as the door closed behind him.

There was a second of silence, broken by a snarl from the old count and a cry from Teresa—a sob of relief. She leaned against the wall, in the reaction suddenly faint. Her husband's summons had filled her with apprehension—for she recalled the sound in the shrubbery—and his announcement, full of menace to Gordon, had shaken her mettle of resistance. She remembered an old story of a hired assassin whispered of him when she was a child. At the insane triumph and excitement in his manner she had been convinced and frightened. Terror had seized her anew—the shivering terror of him that had come to her on the monastery path and that her after-resentment had allayed.

Now, however, her fear calmed, indignation at what she deemed a ruse to compel an admission of concern that had but added to her husband's fury, sent the blood back to her cheeks. All the repressed feeling that his cumulative humiliations had aroused burst their bonds. She turned on him with quivering speech:

"Evviva, Signore!" she said bitterly. "Are you not proud to have frightened a woman by this valorous trick? Have you other comedies to garnish the evening? *Non importa*—I leave them for your guest."

Trevanion's face wore a smile of relish as she swept from the room. He was certain now of two things. The old man hated George Gordon; the girl—was she daughter or wife?—did not. Had he unwittingly stumbled upon a chapter in the life of the man he trailed which he had not known? He seated himself with coolness, his inherent dare-deviltry flaunting to the surface.

Through the inflamed brain of the master of the casa,

as he stared at him with his hawk eyes, were crowding suspicions. Paolo's description had made him certain of the identity of the man in the garden. But his command to his secretary had named only the milord at the osteria. That the two were one and the same, Paolo could not have known—otherwise he would not have brought another. But how had he been deceived? How, unless the man before him was a confederate—had played the other's part at the inn? It was a decoy, so the lover of his wife, with less risk in the amour, might laugh in his sleeve at him, the hoodwinked husband, the richest noble in Romagna! His lean fingers twitched.

"May I ask," he queried, wetting his lips, "what the *real* milord—who is also in town to-day—pays you for filling his place to-night?"

Possessed as he was, his host could not mistake the other's unaffected surprise. Before the start he gave, suspicion of collusion shredded thin.

"He is in Venice," said Trevanion.

"He came to Ravenna this afternoon."

His enemy there? Trevanion remembered the laugh of the woman in the wagonette. Jane Clermont had mocked him! She lied! She had come there to meet Gordon. Vicious passion gathered on his brow, signs readily translatable, that glozed the old man's anger with dawning calculation.

"You have acted another's *rôle* to-night," Count Guiccioli said, leaning across the table, "and done it well, I judge, for my secretary is no fool. I confess to a curiosity to know why you chose to appear as the milord for whom I waited."

Trevanion's malevolence leaped in his answer: "Be-

cause I hate him! And hate him more than you! In Italy I can add to the reputation he owns already in England! I want his name to blacken and blister wherever it is spoken! That's why!"

The count made an exclamation, as through his fevered blood the idea of the truth raced swiftly. The town loungers had gaped at the osteria to see the carousal of the milord—so Paolo had said. Why, it was as good as a play! He smiled—and thought further:

The Englishman had been in Ravenna and had eluded his grasp. Here before him was youth, clever and unscrupulous; if less cunning, yet bolder—a hatred antedating his own—a ready tool. Who could tell to what use such an ally might be put? The suggestion fascinated him. He laughed a splintered treble as he rang the bell sharply for his secretary.

"A bottle of Amontillado!" he commanded. "My good Paolo, we drink a health to the guest of the casa."

As the secretary disappeared Trevanion drew the kriss from beneath his coat and handed it to its owner. "A pretty trifle," he said coolly; "I took the liberty of admiring it as I waited. I quite forgot to replace it."

"My dear friend!" protested the count, pushing it back across the table, "I rejoice that you should fancy one of my poor possessions! I pray you accept it. Who knows? You may one day find a use for the plaything!"

They sat late over the wine. They were still conversing when a window in the casa overlooking the garden opened and Teresa's face looked out. Her straining emotions had left her trembling. Who was

the swarthy, fierce-eyed man? At the first sight of him she had felt an instinctive recoil.

But her puzzle fell away as she gazed out into the soft night with its peace and somnolent incense. From the garden below, where she and Gordon had sat, came the beat of a night-bird bending the poppies. Overhead tiny pale clouds drifted like cherry-blossoms in the breeze. Far off the moon dropped closer to the velvet clasp of the legend-haunted hills. To-night, foreboding seemed treason while her heart held that one meeting, as the sky the stars, inalienable, eternal. Gordon was safe, on his way to Venice, and with him was her letter—on which hung her hope for a papal separation,—all that was possible under the seneschalship of Rome.

At length she closed the shutter, knelt at the ivory crucifix that hung in a corner of the raftered chamber, and crept into bed.

She fell asleep with a curl—the one he had kissed—drawn across her lips.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE HEART OF A WOMAN

From the coming of Gordon on that unforgettable night to the garden, Teresa's pulse began to beat more tumultuously. To offset the humiliation of her daily life indoors and the tireless surveillance in the person of Paolo of well-nigh her every excursion, she had the buoyant memory of that hour and the promise of her appeal to the Church's favor. The three essentials of woman's existence—love, hope and purpose—were now hers in spite of all.

More than one new problem perturbed her. There was the swarthy visitor coming and going mysteriously, closeted with her husband weekly. His strange entrance into the casa that day of all days—the stranger ruse that had been practised through him upon her—seemed to connect him in some occult, uncanny way with the man of whom, every hour of day and night, she mused and dreamed. Thinking of this, and weighing her husband's hatred, at first she hoped Gordon would not return to Ravenna.

There had befallen another matter, too, which seemed to have absorbed much of the old count's attention, and

which, to her relief, took him from the city for days at a time.

Teresa knew what this matter was. In every visit to her father he had talked of it triumphantly—the rising of the Italian peoples and the breaking of the galling yoke of Austria. During this spring strange rumors had prevailed. Twice, morning had found placards posted on the city walls: "Up with the Republic!" and "Down with the Pope!" The foreign police were busy; houses were searched and more than one Ravennese was seized under suspicion of membership in the *Carbonari,* whose mystic free-masonry hid the secrets of enrolling bands and stores of powder. Knowledge of the sycophant part her husband was currently suspected of playing came to Teresa bit by bit, in sidelong looks, as her carriage rolled through the town, and more definitely from Tita. The Austrian wind blew strongest and Count Guiccioli trimmed his sails accordingly.

But replete with its one image, Teresa's heart left small space to these things. Gordon's face flushed her whole horizon. And as the empty weeks linked on, she began, in spite of her fears, to long passionately to see him again. That her letter had reached its destination she knew, for the Contessa Albrizzi paused an hour for a visit of state at the casa—on her way to Rome. But no word came from its bearer, and each day Tita returned from the osteria messageless.

She could not guess the struggle that had torn Gordon—the struggle between reasoning conscience and unreasoning desire—or how fiercely, the letter once delivered by Fletcher, he had fought down the longing to return to Ravenna, which held his child, and *her.* He

had been able to aid her once, prompted Desire; she might need him again. If he stayed away in her trouble, what would she deem him? Suppose by chance she should hear of the orgy he had witnessed at the osteria? This reflection maddened him. "Yet," Reason answered, "not to see her is the only safety. She is unhappy now; but can I—because life is ended for me—to bring her present comfort, run the risk of embittering her life further?" So he had argued.

There came a week for Teresa when Paolo was summoned to Faenza, whither her husband had gone two days before. The espionage of the casa relaxed, and on her birthday, with Tita on the box, she drove alone through the afternoon forest to the Bagnacavallo convent with a gift for the Mother Superior, the only mother her childhood had known.

When she issued from the gate again she carried her birthday gift, a Bible, and a German magazine given her by the nun who had taught her that tongue. In her heart she bore a far heavier burden, for in that hour she had held a child in her arms and listened to a story that had sunk into her soul. Her face was deathly white and her limbs dragged.

Calling to Tita to wait, she left the road and climbed a path that zigzagged up a wooded knoll overlooking the narcissus-scented valley and the hurrying river that flowed past the convent walls. The briers tore her hands, but she paid no heed, climbing breathlessly.

The sparser crown of the hillock was canopied by shaggy vine-festoons and dappled by the shadow-play of firs, whose aged roots were covered with scalloped fungus growths. As a child this had been her favorite spot.

With one of these giant tree-fungi for a seat she had loved to day-dream, gazing down across the convent inclosure and the stream that flowed silverly on, past Ravenna, to the sea. She stood a moment knee-deep in the bracken, her form tense with suffering, then dropped the books on the ground and throwing herself down, burst into tears. She wept long and passionately, in utter desolation.

She had listened to the Superior's story with her face buried in the child's frock, now burning, now drenched with cold. The touch had given her a wild delight and yet an agony unfathomable. As she lay and wept, tenderness and torture still mingled inextricably in her emotions. She knew now why Gordon had been in Ravenna that spring day. He had told the truth; it had been with no thought of her.

A sudden memory of his words in the casa garden came with sickening force: "By a tie that holds me, and by a bond you believe in, I have no right to stand here now." Was this the tie he had meant? Not the unloving wife in England, but the mother of this child —a later, nearer one? When he had come that once to her, was it at best out of pity? Did he love this other woman? Was this why she herself had seen him no more?

Before the acute shaft of this pain the facts she had learned of his life in London fell unheeded. They belonged to that far dim past that he had forsaken and that had forsaken him! But the one fact she knew now had to do with his present, here in Italy—the present that held *her!* She was facing for the first time in her life the hydra, elemental passion—jealousy. And

in the grip of its merciless talons everything of truth in her wavered.

For a moment she lost hold on her own heart, her instinct, her trust in Gordon's word, the faith that had returned to her at San Lazzarro. What if all—all—what the whole world said, what this magazine told of him—were true after all, and she, desolate and grieving, the only one deceived? *What if it were!* She drew the magazine close to her tear-swollen eyes, only to thrust it from her desperately.

"No, no!" she said. "Not that! It is a lie! I will not believe it!"

In her anguish she sat up, flinging her hat aside, and leaned against a tree. Her glance fell on the great saffron fungus that jutted, a crumpled half-disk, above its roots. Into the brittle shiny surface words had been etched with a sharp point—lines in English, almost covering it. She began to read the unfamiliar tongue aloud, deciphering the words slowly at first, then with more confidence:

> "River, that rollest by the ancient walls,
> Where dwells the lady of my love—when she
> Walks by thy brink, and there perchance recalls
> A faint and fleeting memory of me—"

A color tinged her paleness; she bent closer in a startled wonder.

> "What if thy deep and ample stream should be
> A mirror of my heart, where she may read
> A thousand thoughts I now betray to thee,
> Wild as thy wave, and headlong as thy speed!

What do I say—a mirror of my heart?
Are not thy waters sweeping, dark, and strong?
Such as my feelings were and are, thou art;
And such as thou art were my passions long.

And left long wrecks behind, and now again,
Borne in our old unchanged career, we move;
Thou tendest wildly onward to the main,
And I—to loving one I should not love!"

She drew herself half-upright with a sob. She was not mistaken! No other could have written those lines, rhythmically sad and passionate, touched with abnegation. He had been near her when she had not guessed —had been here, in this very nook where she now sat! Recently, too, for new growth had not blotted the characters. Her heart beat poignantly:

"The wave that bears my tears returns no more:
Will she return, by whom that wave shall sweep?
Both tread thy banks, both wander on thy shore,
I near thy source, she by the dark blue deep.

She will look on thee,—I have look'd on thee,
Full of that thought: and from that moment, ne'er
Thy waters could I dream of, name or see,
Without the inseparable sigh for her!"

For whom had he longed when he wrote? For the woman whose child—*his* child, denied him now!—was hidden in the convent below? No! The mist of anguish melted. She felt her bitterness ebbing fast away.

What else mattered? Nothing! Not what this convent held! Not all his past, though even the worst of all the tales she had ever heard were true; though what the pamphlet at her feet alleged were true a thousand

times over—though it were the worst crime of all man punished on earth! Nothing, nothing! At this moment she knew that, for all the dreams of God bred in her, without him, prayers and faiths and life itself went for naught as human hearts are made.

Clasping her hands she read to the end:

"Her bright eyes will be imaged in thy stream,—
Yes! they will meet the wave I gaze on now:
Mine cannot witness, even in a dream,
That happy wave repass me in its flow!

But that which keepeth us apart is not
Distance, nor depth of wave, nor space of earth,
But the distraction of a various lot,
As various as the climates of our birth.

My blood is all meridian; were it not,
I had not left my clime, nor should I be
In spite of tortures ne'er to be forgot,
A slave again of love,—at least of thee!"

Kneeling over the fungus, absorbed, she had not heard a quick step behind her. She heard nothing in her abandon, till a voice—*his* voice—spoke her name.

CHAPTER XXXIX

BARRIERS BURNED AWAY

Teresa came to her feet with a cry. Her mingled emotions were yet so recent that she had had no time to recover poise. Gordon's face was as strangely moved. Surprise edged it, but overlapping this was a something lambent, desirous, summoned by sight of her tears.

In the first swift glimpse, through the fern fronds, of that agitated form bent above the fungus, he had noted the tokens of returning strength—and knew her present grief was from some cause nearer than the casa in Ravenna. These were not tears of mere womanly sensibility, called forth by the lines written there, for a shadow of pain was still lurking in her eyes. Was it grief for him? He tossed aside gloves and riding-crop and drew her to a seat on the warm pine-needles before he spoke:

"I did not imagine your eyes would ever see that!"

She wiped away the telltale drops hastily, feeling a guilty relief to think he had misread them.

"This is an old haunt of mine," she said. "I loved it when I was a girl—only a year ago, how long it seems!—in the convent there!"

He started. The fact explained her presence to-day. She had known those walls that hid Allegra! It seemed

to bring them immeasurably nearer. If he could only tell her! Reckless, uncaring as she knew a part of his past had been, could he bear to show her this concrete evidence of its dishonor?

Looking up at the pallid comeliness under its slightly graying hair, Teresa was feeling a swift, clairvoyant sense of the struggle that had kept him from her, without understanding all its significance.

"I am glad I came in time," she continued. "A few days and the words will show no longer. I shall not need them then," she went on, her face tinted. "I shall know them by heart. As soon as I read the first lines, I knew they were yours—that you had been here."

"I am stopping at Bologna," he told her.

"Ah, *Madonna!*" she said under her breath. "And you have been so near Ravenna!"

"Better it were a hundred leagues!" he exclaimed. "And yet—distant or near, it is the same. I think of you, Teresa! That is my punishment. Every day, as I have ridden through the pines, every hour as I have sat on this hill—and that has been often—I have thought of you!"

"I knew that"—she was gazing past him to the river and the far dusky amethyst of the hills—"when I read what is on the fungus."

Thereafter neither spoke for a moment. A noisy cicala droned from a near chestnut bough, and from somewhere down the slope came the brooding coo of a wood-dove. At length he said:

"There were tears on your cheek when I first saw you. They were not for the verses, I know."

She shook her head slowly. "It was something"—

she could not tell him all the truth—"something I saw in that." She pointed to the German magazine.

He reached and retrieved it, but she put her hand on his restrainingly.

"Is it about me?"

"Yes," she admitted; "but—"

"May I not see it?"

"Nothing in it really matters," she entreated. "It could never make any difference to me—now! Not even if it were true. Your past is as if it belonged to some other person I never saw and never can know. You believe that? Tell me you do!"

"I do," he responded; "I do!"

"Then do not read it."

"But suppose it is false. Either way, I would tell you the truth."

"That is just it." Her fingers clasped his on the cover. "I know you would. But I do not believe what it says! I cannot! You can never have done such things! Ah, is it not enough that I have that trust?—even," she ended hurriedly, "though it would make no difference?"

His pulses were beating painfully. He drew her fingers gently from their hold and opened the magazine to a page turned down lengthwise. It was a critique of his drama of "Cain"—sole fruit of that last year in Venice—which he had himself called "a drama of madness" and in sheer mocking bravado had posted to John Murray, his publisher. He saw at a glance that the article was signed with the name of Germany's greatest mind, the famous Goethe.

She was trembling. "Remember," she said earnestly;

"I have not asked you! I should never have asked you!"

Gordon translated the cramped text with a strange lurid feeling, like coming in touch with an ancient past:

"The character of the author's life permits with difficulty a just appreciation of his genius. Scarcely any one compassionates the suffering which cries out laboriously in his poems, since it arises from the phantoms of his own evil acts which trouble him. When a bold and impetuous youth, he stole the affections of a Florentine lady of quality. Her husband discovered the affair and slew his wife. But the murderer on the next night was found stabbed to death on the street, nor was there any one save the lover on whom it seemed suspicion could attach. The poet removed from Florence, but these unhappy spirits have haunted his whole life since."

He raised his eyes from the page. Her face was turned away, her hand pulling up the grass-spears in a pathetic apprehension.

"Teresa," he said in a smothered voice; "it is not true. I have never been in Florence."

"I knew—I knew!" she cried, and all her soul looked into his. She had not really credited. But the tangible allegation, coming at the moment when her heart was wrenched with that convent discovery and warped from its orbit of instinct, had dismayed and disconcerted her. The balm she had longed for was not proof, it was only reassurance.

He closed the magazine. The feeling that had choked his utterance was swelling in his throat. For the rest of the world he cared little, but for her!

She leaned toward him, her eyes shining. "I know how you have suffered! You have not deserved it. I

have learned so much, since I saw you last, of your life in England!"

His tone shook. "Have you learned all? That my wife left me in the night and robbed me of my child? That society shut its doors upon me? That I was driven from London like a wild beast—a scapegoat at which any man might cast a stone?"

"Yes," she breathed, "all that, and more! I have not understood it quite, for our Italy is so different. But you have helped me understand it now! It was like this."

She picked up the Bible from where it had fallen and turned the pages quickly. "Listen," she said, and began to read:

"And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats . . . But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.

"And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness.

"And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness."

He had risen and now stood movelessly before her.

She looked up as she finished. "So it was with you."

"Yes," he said in a low voice. "And so I have lived ever since, a murderless Cain with a mark on my brow! So shall I live and die, hated and avoided by all men!"

"No!" she contradicted, coming to him. "That will not be! I see further and clearer than that! It is not for such an end that you have lived and written and suffered! But for something nobler, which the world that hates you now will honor! I see it! I know it!"

"Stop!" he exclaimed, "I cannot bear it. I am not a murderer, Teresa, but all of the past you forgive with such divine compassion, you do not know. There is a silence yet to break which I have kept, a chapter unlovely to look upon that you have not seen."

"I ask nothing!" she interrupted.

"I must," he went on with dry lips. "You shall see it all, to the dregs. In that convent, Teresa,—"

She put a hand over his lips. "You need not. For—I already know."

He looked in dazed wonder. "You know? And—you do not condemn?"

"That other woman—do you love her?"

"No, Teresa. I have not seen her for two years."

"Did she ever love you?"

"Never in her life," he answered, his face again averted.

Her own was glowing with a strange light. "Look at me," she said softly.

He turned to her, his eyes—golden-gray like seaweed glimpsed through deep water—cored with a hungry, hopeless fire which seemed to transform her whole frame to thirsty tinder.

. . . FEELING HER FORM SWAY TOWARD HIM WITH FIERCE TUMULTUOUS GLADNESS. *p. 289.*

"Ah," she whispered, "do you think it could matter, then?"

An overmastering emotion, blent of bitterness and longing, surged through him, beating down constraint, blotting out all else, all that thrilled him finding its way into broken speech. In that moment he forgot himself and the past, forgot the present and what the convent held—forgot what bound them both—forgot grief and danger. London and Venice, Annabel, the master of Casa Guiccioli drew far off. There was nothing but this fragrant, Italian forest, this whispering glade above the blue rushing of the arrowy river, this sun-drenched afternoon—and Teresa there beside him. With an impulse wholly irresistible he caught her to him, feeling her form sway toward him with fierce tumultuous gladness.

"Amor mio!" she breathed, and their lips clung into a kiss.

As she strained back in his embrace, letting the tide of love ripple over her, looking up into his face in desperate joy, something swift and flashing like a silver swallow darted through the air.

It sung between them—a Malay kriss—and struck Gordon above the heart.

CHAPTER XL

THE OATH ON THE KRISS

Teresa stood chained with horror—the cry frozen on her lips. As the silver flash had flown she had seen a dark, oriental face disappear between the bracken and had recognized it.

Gordon had shuddered as the blow struck, then stood perfectly still, his arms about her. In that instant he remembered the scene he had witnessed at the Ravenna osteria, and his heart said within him: "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

Her voice came then in a scream that woke the place and brought Tita rushing up the path.

When he reached them, her fingers had drawn out the wet blade and were striving desperately to stanch the blood with her handkerchief, as, white to the lips with pain, Gordon leaned against a tree. After that first cry, in which her whole being had sounded its terror, she had not spoken. Now she turned to Tita, who stood dumfounded.

"Tita, quickly! You and I must help his lordship to the road. He is wounded."

"Teresa,"—Gordon sought for words through the

dizziness that was engulfing him,—"leave me. My horse is in the edge of the forest. At Bologna I shall find a surgeon."

"You cannot ride. It would kill you. My carriage is near the convent gate."

He shook his head. "You have risked enough for me. Tita,—"

"He can bring the horse around," she answered. "Come!" She drew one of Gordon's arms about her shoulder, feeling him waver. "That is right—so!"

With Tita on the other side, they began the descent. She walked certainly along the difficult path, though every nerve was thrilling with agony, her mind one incessant clamor. At the expense of his own heart he had stayed away. And this was what their chance meeting to-day had brought him. This!

Gordon was breathing hard at the foot of the hill. He had fought desperately to retain consciousness, but a film was clouding his eyes.

"It is only a few steps now," she said, "to the carriage."

He stopped short.

"You must obey me," she insisted wildly, her voice vibrating. "It is the only way! You must go to Ravenna!"

"Tita—bring my horse!"

It was the last stubborn flash of the will, fainting in physical eclipse. With the words his hand fell heavily from her shoulder and Tita caught him in his arms.

At a sign from Teresa, the servant lifted him into the carriage.

"Home!" she commanded, "and drive swiftly."

Through the miles of rapid motion under the ebon shadows deepening to twilight she sat chafing Gordon's hands, her eyes, widened with a great suspense, upon the broadening stain crimsoning his waistcoat.

In that interminable ride her soul passed through a furnace of transformation. The touch of his lips upon hers had been the one deathless instant of life's unfolding. In that kiss she had felt poured out all the virginal freshness of a love *renaissant* and complete, no more to be withheld than a torrent leaping to the sea. But the awful instant that followed, with its first glimpse into the hideous limbo of possibilities, showed her all else that might lie in that love, of the irreparable, the disastrous, the infinitely terrifying. Her marriage had been a baleful bond of ring and book, seasoned with hate, empty of sanctity. His had been sunk somewhere in the black slough of the past, a stark dead thing. That they two should love each other—she had imagined no further. She had known her own heart, but that hour on the hill had been the complete surety that Gordon loved her fully in return.

Born of his extremity, there swelled in her now the wondrous instinct of the lioness that is a part of every woman's love. It lent her its courage. All fear, save the one surpassing dread that gnawed her heart, slipped from her.

Dark fell before they reached the town, and in the quiet street the freight of the carriage was not noted. Before the entrance of Casa Guiccioli stood her father's chaise.

Count Gamba met her in the hall, to start at her strained look and at the pallid face of the man Tita

carried—a face unknown to him. Paolo was behind him; by this she knew her husband was returned.

She scarcely heeded her father's ejaculations. "Bring linen and water quickly to the large chamber in the garden wing," she directed, "and send for Doctor Aglietti."

Paolo went stealthily to inform his master.

When Count Guiccioli crossed the threshold of the candle-lighted room he came upon a strange scene. Teresa bent over the bed, her face colorless as a mask. Her father, opposite, to whom she had as yet told nothing, was tying a temporary bandage. Between them lay the inert form of the man against whom his own morbid rage had been amassing. His eyes flared. Where had she found him? Had Trevanion bungled or betrayed? Did she guess? And guessing, had she brought him to this house, in satanic irony, to die before his very sight?

At the suspicion the fever of his moody eyes flew to his face. His countenance became distorted. He burst upon them with a crackling exclamation: "The Venetian dog! Who has dared fetch him here?"

"*Zitto!*" said Count Gamba pettishly. "Don't you see the man is wounded?"

"Wounded or whole, by the body of Bacchus! He shall go back to-night to Bologna!" He took a menacing step forward.

"How did you know he was lodged there?"

Teresa's steely inquiry stayed him. She had lifted her face, calm as a white moon. He stopped, nonplussed.

"You had good reason to know." She drew from her belt a Malay kriss, its blade stained with red. "This

is what struck him. It belonged to you. Am I to learn what it means to bear the name of a murderer?"

Her father stared his amazement. *"Dio santissimo!"* he exclaimed. Was this why she had been so pale?

Before her movement her husband had shrunk involuntarily. "I knew nothing of it," he said in a muffled fury; "I am just come from Faenza."

"I saw whose hand struck the blow." She spoke with deadly quietness. "I have seen him more than once under this roof. But whose was the brain? Who furnished him this weapon? It was gone from the arras the day after you brought him to the casa to be your *sicario*—to do what you dared not do yourself! Fool!" Her voice rose. "Do you think a peer of England common clay for your clean-handed *bravos?* Are English nobles stabbed abroad without an accounting to the last *soldo?* Do you suppose no Romagnan noble ever went to the fortress with confiscate estates? Is your reputation so clean that if he dies you think to escape what I shall say?"

A greenish hue had overspread the fiery sallow of the old count's face, ghastly under the candles. She had touched two vulnerable points at once—cupidity and fear. Something, too, in what she said brought a swift unwelcome memory. He recalled another—a poet, also —Manzoni, the Italian, dead by a hired assassin in Forli years before; in the night sometimes still that man's accusing look came before him. Beads of sweat started on his forehead.

"Cheeks of the Virgin!" cried Count Gamba, who had maintained a rigid silence. "Have you no word to this?"

"He was her lover! She knew where to find him today. It is not the first time. He was her lover before I married her."

The other's hands clenched. Teresa's accusation had astonished and shocked him. But as he saw that cowering look, speaking its own condemnation, he credited for the first time the story of that other slain man. At this affront, his gaunt, feeble form straightened with all the dignity and pride of his race.

Teresa's answer rang with a subtle, electric energy. "That is false! You never asked—you only accused. Believing all falsehood of me, you have made every day of my life in your house a separate purgatory. I have kept silent thus long, even to my father. Now I speak before him. Father," she said with sudden passion, "he has believed this since my wedding day. There is scarcely an hour since then that he has not heaped insult and humiliation upon me. I will bear it no longer! I have already appealed to the Curia."

Her eyes transfixed her husband. "By the law I may not leave your roof to nurse this man, so I have brought him here. What you have believed of myself and of him is false. But now, if you will hear the truth, I will tell you! I *do* love him! I love him as I love my life—and more, the blessed Virgin knows!—a million times more!"

As she spoke her passion made her beauty extraordinary. It smote her father with appealing force and with a pang at his own ambitious part in her wedding. He had thought of rank and station, not of her happiness.

"You shall answer to me, Count, for this!" he said sternly.

"No, father!"

Count Gamba looked at her questioningly. He faced Count Guiccioli as Teresa went on:

"This is what I demand. If he lives he shall stay here till he is well. Not as a guest; he would accept no hospitality from this house. He shall hold this wing of the casa under rental."

There was a moment's pause.

"So be it." The assent was grudging and wrathful.

"One thing more. So long as he is in the casa you will cause him no physical harm—neither you nor your servants."

While he hesitated a sound came from the bed. Gordon's eyes were open; they held faint but conscious knowledge.

From the abyss of nothingness those voices had called to him, like conversation in a dream. Sight had opened more fully and he had stared at the gilded rafters, puzzled. This was not the Hotel Pellegrino in Bologna. He stirred and felt a twinge of pain. With the voices grown articulate, it came flashing back—that one kiss; the flying dart of agony; the dizzy descent; Tita and—Teresa. He suddenly saw a face: the old man at San Lazzarro, Teresa's husband! He shut his eyes to drive away the visions, and her clear tones called them wide again.

He heard fully and understandingly then; knew that Trevanion and Count Guiccioli had made common cause; realized the courage with which Teresa had brought him to her husband's casa—all with a bitter-sweet pain

of helplessness and protest against the logic of circumstances that had thrust him into the very position that by all arguments looking to her ultimate happiness he must have avoided. He heard her voice demand that grudging promise of his safety. It was then he had moaned—less with physical than mental pain.

Teresa leaned to the bed, where Gordon had lifted himself on his elbow. The effort dislodged the bandage and its edges reddened swiftly. He strove to speak, but the effort sickened him and he fell back on the pillows.

Teresa turned again upon Count Guiccioli. "Swear it, or all I know Ravenna shall know to-morrow!" She held the kriss toward him, hilt up, like a Calvary, and half involuntarily his bent fingers touched his breast.

"I swear," he said in a stifled voice.

"Father, you hear?"

"I am witness," said Count Gamba grimly.

CHAPTER XLI

ASHES OF DENIAL

Days went by. Summer was merging into full-bosomed autumn of turquoise heavens, more luscious foliage and ripening olives.

Gordon's wound had proven deep, but luckily not too serious, thanks to a rough fragment of stone in his pocket, which the surgeon declared had turned the heavy blade, and which Teresa had covered with secret kisses and put carefully away. But to his weakness from loss of blood, a tertian ague had added its high temperature, and strength had been long in returning.

He had hours of delirium when Teresa and Fletcher —whom Tita had brought from Bologna with Gordon's belongings—alternately sat by his bedside. Sometimes, then, he dictated strange yet musical stanzas which she was able to set down. It was a subconscious bubbling up from the silt-choked well of melody within him: a clouded rivulet, finding an unused way along turgid channels of fever.

More often Gordon seemed to be living again in his old life—with Hobhouse in the Greece that he had loved—in London at White's club with Beau Brummell, or with Sheridan or Tom Moore at the Cocoa-Tree. At

such times Teresa seemed to comprehend all his strivings and agonies, and wept tears of pity and yearning.

Often, too, he muttered of Annabel and Ada, and then the fierce jealousy that had once before come to her assailed her anew. It was not a jealousy now, however, of any one person; it was a stifling, passionate resentment of that past of his into which she could not enter, lying instinct and alive in some locked chamber of his brain to defy and outwit her.

Early in his betterment a subtle inducement not to hasten the going he knew was inevitable ambushed Gordon. He found folded in his writing tablet a six months' lease of the apartments he occupied. The signature was his own, added, he readily guessed, during his fever. The stupendous rental with which the old count had comforted his covetous soul was a whet to the temptation. The thought to which he yielded, however, was the reflection that to depart without showing himself to Ravenna—whose untravelled gossips had made of his illness at the casa a topic of interest—would neither conceal the real situation nor make easier Teresa's position. He prolonged his stay, therefore, riding with her at the hour of the *corso* in the great coach and six, and later appearing at the *conversazioni* of the vice-legate's and at the provincial opera, to hear the "Barber of Seville" or Alfieri's "Filippo."

One day a child in Teresa's care rode from the convent of Bagnacavallo to a father whom she had never seen, and thereafter Gordon saw with less kaleidoscopic clearness the walls of the fool's paradise fate was rearing, brick by brick.

So the long weeks of convalescence dropped by like

falling leaves. In spite of the constrained oath he had heard on a certain night in his chamber, Gordon more than once wondered grimly what hour a stiletto might end it all. That Teresa guarded well, he realized once with a sudden thrill, when he opened the door of his bedroom in the night to find Tita's great form stretched asleep across the threshold.

The master of the casa, meanwhile, was seldom to be seen. When he encountered Gordon, it was with snarling, satiric courtesy—a bitter, armed armistice. Teresa did not doubt he had been more than once to Rome, but what effect his visit might have on her petition she could not guess. The Contessa Albrizzi was powerful, but he was an influential factor also. If her plea were granted, well and good. If not, at least she was happy now. And because she was happy now, she thrust away, with a woman's fatuousness, the thought that there must come a time when Gordon would go.

Trevanion Gordon met but once, and then with Paolo at the casa entrance. A single steady look had hung between them. The other's eyes shifted and he passed in. Teresa was with Gordon at the moment and her hand had trembled on his arm. She said nothing, but that night he came upon Tita in his bedroom, oiling his pocket-pistols—which he did not wear.

What he had said once as he fought down the passion of murder in his soul recurred to him as he laid them away: "What comes to me thus, I myself have beckoned. The Great Mechanism shall have its way." If Trevanion then had seemed the Nemesis of his past, he seemed doubly so now. The vengeance had fallen just when the cup of joy was at his lips—in that one supreme

moment: fate's red reminder that the moment was not his, but filched from his own resolve and from Teresa's peace.

But though he struck not openly, Gordon was soon to discover that Trevanion's hand was unwearied; Shelley came to him from Pisa, bringing report of fresh fictions afloat in the London press: his pasha-like residence on the island of Mitylene, and his romantic voyages to Sicily and Ithaca. These Gordon heard with a new sting, named as his companion the Contessa Guiccioli, who, it was stated in detail, had been sold to him by her husband.

Not that Gordon cared, for himself. Save as they might have power to hurt her, that kiss on the convent-hill, when it sweetened the bitterness that had fallen in that hour, had burned away the barb from all such canards. All that signified was Teresa—from whom he must soon part.

Parting: that was the sting! Coiled in it was a realization that in every conscious moment since that stabbing thrust in the forest had been rankling with growing pain. It was, that his own weakness had made withdrawal from her life an infinitely crueler thing, had made his elimination at one time less possible and more necessitous. That kiss had changed the universe for them both. For either of them, bound or free, nothing could ever be the same again!

Sleepless and battling, the night after Shelley's visit, Gordon asked himself fiercely why, after all, life might not go on for them still the same. Was it *his* fault? Had *he* created these conditions that separated them? What did either he or she owe this old man who hated

her and had tried to take his life? Hereafter, would not her existence alone with him in the casa be a more intolerable thing than ever? He, Gordon, could rob him of nothing he now possessed or had ever possessed. Besides, in time—who could tell how soon?—changes must inevitably occur. In the natural course, her husband would die. Then Teresa would, in truth, be free.

He paused in his interminable pace and groaned aloud. What then? For himself there could be no retracing of steps. Whatever the issues to him and to her, he could not go back to England, invoke the law and free himself. When he had quitted London, life—the life of wife and home—had seemed ended. He had thought only of Ada, his child, when he had signed that paper which put it forever out of his power alone to break the tie which bound him to Annabel. Between him and Teresa reared the law, a cold brazen wall between two hearts of fire. "I cannot!" he said. "The old tie holds. It is too late! Because one woman's pitiless pureness has ruined me, shall I ruin another woman's pitying purity?"

So while the dark wore away to dawn, his thought began and ended with the same desolate cry.

As the first light came through the windows, he blew out the candles. He must go—though it shut him again from sight of Allegra—though it meant forever.

CHAPTER XLII

GORDON TELLS A STORY

Gordon threw the window wide. The sun had broken through the mist, the lilies were awake in their beds, and the acacias were shaking the dew from their solemn harmonies of green and olive. How sweet the laurel smelled!

A long time he stood there. At length he turned into the room. He collected his smaller belongings for Fletcher to pack, then drew out a portmanteau. It was filled with books and loose manuscript, gathered by the valet when he had removed from Venice.

As he re-read the pages, Gordon flushed with a sense of shame. Full of beauty as they were, would Shelley have written them? Or would Teresa, who treasured one book of his and had loved those simple lines etched on the fungus, read these with like approval?

An aching dissatisfaction—a fiery recrudescent distaste seized him. He rolled the leaves together and descended to the garden. At the base of a stone sun-dial he set the roll funnel-shape and knelt to strike a light.

He had not seen Teresa nor heard her approach till she caught his arm.

"What is it you burn?" she asked.

"The beginning of a poem I wrote a long time ago, named 'Don Juan'."

"May I read it first?"

He shook his head. "It is not worthy."

She looked at him seriously, striving to translate his thought, and with a sudden impulse, stooped and picked up the roll. "Do not destroy it," she said; "one day you will finish it—more worthily."

He hesitated a moment, then thrust the manuscript into his pocket and followed her to the bench where they had sat the night Tita had led him to the columned gate, and how many gilded days since! With what words should he tell her what he must say?

He saw that she held in her hand a small rough fragment of stone.

"What is that?" he questioned, trying to speak lightly. "A jewel?"

A change passed over her face and she raised the stone to her lips. "Yes," she answered; "do you not recognize it?"

As he looked at it curiously, she added: "It was in your pocket that day on the convent hill. You never missed it, did you? The kriss"—she shuddered as she spoke—"struck it. See—here is the mark. It saved your life."

Wondering, he took it from her hand. "Strange!" he said, as he handed it back. "It is a piece of the tomb of Juliet which I got long ago in Verona."

"Juliet?" she repeated, and dropped the stone on the bench between them, coloring. "Did you—care for her?"

The feminine touch in tone and gesture brought Gor-

don at one time a smile and a pang. It had not occurred to him that Shakespeare could be unknown to her. "All Englishmen love her," he said gravely; "she was one of the great lovers of the world. She died five hundred years ago."

Her face was flushed more deeply now. "Will you tell me about her?"

Sitting there, the revelation of the early morning enfolding them, he told her the undying story of those tragic loves and deaths that the great Anglo-Saxon gave to all ages.

"There were two noble families in Verona," he began, "who for generations had been at enmity—the Capulets and the Montagues. Juliet was the daughter of Lord Capulet. She was so beautiful her fame went throughout the country. Romeo, scion of the house of Montague, heard of her beauty, and to see it, went masked to a fête given by her father. Among the Veronese ladies, he saw one who shone amid the splendor like a jewel in an Ethiop's ear. They danced together, and he kissed her hand. Not till they parted did either know the other was an enemy. That night, Romeo, unable to stay from the house where he had left his heart, scaled the wall of its garden and they plighted troth upon her balcony. Next day they were secretly married by a monk whom Romeo had prevailed upon.

"There had been one, however, who, beneath his mask, recognized the uninvited guest—a nephew of Lord Capulet himself. He kept silence then, but the day of the marriage he met Romeo, forced a quarrel, and was killed by him. For this, Romeo was sentenced to banishment. That night he gained Juliet's chamber from

the garden. Only these few hours were theirs; at dawn he fled to Mantua, till the monk could make public their marriage.

"Lord Capulet meanwhile had selected another for Juliet's husband and bade her prepare for the nuptials. She dared not tell the truth, and in her extremity appealed to the monk. He counselled her to consent to her father's plans, and on the night before the marriage to drink the contents of a phial he gave her. The potion, he told her, would cause a death-like trance, in which apparently lifeless state she should be laid in the family vault. Thither he would bring Romeo in the night and she should awaken in his arms."

Teresa's eyes had grown brighter. The lovers' meeting among the maskers, the garden trothing and the constrained marriage seemed somehow to fit her own case. She leaned forward as he paused. "And she took the potion?"

"Yes. Love and despair gave her courage. It happened partly as the monk had said. But unluckily the news that Juliet was dead travelled to Mantua faster than his letters. Romeo heard, and heart-broken, came to Verona at midnight, broke open her tomb and swallowed poison by her side. A few moments later she awoke, saw the cup in his hand, and, guessing how it had befallen, unsheathed the dagger he wore and died also by her own hand. So the monk found them, and over their bodies the lords of Capulet and Montague healed the feud of their houses."

The bruised petals of a rose Teresa had plucked fluttered down. "How she loved him!" she said softly.

He remembered that among the volumes in the port-

manteau he had opened had been the "Romeo and Juliet," which he had put into his pocket the night he left England. "I have the book," he said rising; "I will give it to you."

He went back under the flowering trees to fetch it. "This one hour," his heart was repeating; "this last hour! Then I will tell her."

He was gone but a few moments. When he came down the stair she was in the hall. He paused, for a man who had just dismounted at the casa entrance stood before her. Gordon saw Teresa sink to her knees, saw the other make the sign above her head as he handed her a letter, saw him mount and ride away; saw her read and crush it to her breast. What did it mean? The man had worn the uniform of a nuncio of the papal see. Had the Contessa Albrizzi succeeded?

Teresa turned from the entrance and saw him.

"Here is the book," he said.

She took it blankly. Suddenly she thrust the letter into his hands. "Read it," she whispered.

It was the pope's decree. Teresa was free, if not from the priestly bond, at least so far as actions went. Free to leave Casa Guiccioli and to live under her father's roof—free as the law of Church and land could make her. But that was not all. The decree had its conditions, and one of these contained his own name. She was to see him only once each month, between noon and sunset.

Such was Count Guiccioli's sop from Rome.

As Gordon read, he felt a dull anger at the assumption that had coupled his name with hers in that document. Yet underneath he was conscious of a painful

relief; fate had partially solved the problem for them. He raised his eyes as a sob came from Teresa's lips.

She had not thought of possible conditions. A month—how swiftly the last had flown!—seemed suddenly an infinity. She had longed for that message, prayed for it; now she hated it.

Another figure entered at that instant from the street. It was Tita, just from her father's villa. Count Gamba had been less well of late, and now the messenger's face held an anxiety that struck through her own grief.

The news was soon told. Her father had had a syncope at daybreak and the doctor was then with him.

Tita did not tell her the whole: she did not learn till she reached the villa that Count Gamba, suspected of fomenting the revolution, had received notice from the government to quit Romagna within ten days.

CHAPTER XLIII

ONE GOLDEN HOUR

"To-day—to-day!" Teresa's heart said. "To-day he will come!"

Just a month ago she had left Casa Guiccioli forever; now she sat in the fountained garden of the Gamba villa, a few miles from Ravenna, rose-pale, cypress-slender, her wanness accentuated by the black gown she wore—the habit of mourning. The sentence of exile against Count Gamba had never been carried out; a greater than Austria had intervened. Since that morning when a servant had found him unconscious among the cold retorts of his laboratory, clasping the decree that had broken his heart, he had revived, but only to fail again. The end had come soon. A week ago Teresa had followed him to the narrow home over which no earthly power claimed jurisdiction.

As she sat, drenched with the attar of the September afternoon, in her lap the "Romeo and Juliet" which Gordon had given her on their last meeting, gladness crept goldenly through her grief. The book had lain on the arbor bench during the night, and this morning she had

found a letter written on its blank title page. For the hundredth time she perused it now:

"I have found this book in your garden and re-read it in the moonlight. You were absent, or I could not have done so. Others would understand these words if I wrote them in Italian, but you will interpret them in English. You will recognize, too, the handwriting of one who loves you and will divine that over any book of yours he can think only of that fact. In that word, beautiful in all languages, but most so in yours—*amor mio*—is comprised my existence here and hereafter. My destiny has rested with you, and you are a woman, nineteen years of age, and but two out of a convent. Fate has separated us, but to weigh this is now too late. I love you and cannot cease to love you. Will you think of me if the Alps and the ocean divide us? Ah,—but they never can unless you wish it!"

This letter had been wrung from him by the thought of the loss and loneliness in which he could not comfort her; beneath its few words lay the strain and longing of the old struggle. He had told himself at first that her separation could make no difference with his going. But now she was alone, bereft, saddened. If he went, could she love him any the less? So he had wrestled as Jacob wrestled with the angel.

As Teresa read, a moving shadow fell on the page. She looked up to see him coming between the clipped yew hedges. In another moment he had caught her hands in his.

"How you have suffered!" he said, his gaze searching her face, to which a glad flush had leaped.

She framed his head in her arms, just touching his strong brown curling hair with its slender threads of

gray. "I knew you cared. I knew you had been near me often. I found the flowers—and this note."

"I have been here in the garden every night. I was here that one night, too—when you were first alone."

Tears gathered in her eyes.

"It was the decree of exile that killed him," she said slowly. "He loved Italy and hoped for what can never be. They say the uprising in the north has failed and all its chiefs are betrayed. That is the bitterness of it: it was for nothing after all that he died! Italy will not be free. You believe it cannot, I know."

"Sometime," he answered gently. "But not soon. Italy's peasants are not fighting men like the Greeks; they lack the inspiration of history. But no man champions a great cause in vain. And now," he asked, changing the subject, "what shall you do?"

"I have sent the news to my brother Pietro. Cavadja has lost his principality and Prince Mavrocordato is in flight from Wallachia. Pietro is with him. My letters must find and bring him soon. Till then I have Elise—she was my nurse. I shall be glad when Pietro comes. How long it is since I have seen him! He would not know me now. He has only my convent miniature to remind him!"

Gordon's thought fled back to a day when he had swum for the brother's life and found that pictured ivory. Fate had played an intricate game. He would more than once have told her of that incident but for another hounding memory—the recollection of the mad fit of rage in which he had ground the miniature under his heel. He could not tell her that!

"I know why you have stayed on at the casa," she said; "that it is for my sake, to spare me idle tongues. Yet I have been so afraid for you. You would never go armed!"

"I am in small danger," he smiled. "Fletcher, and Tita whom you left me for body-guard, watch zealously. One or the other is always under foot. One would think I were Ali Pasha himself."

He spoke half humorously, trying to coax the smile back to her lips. He did not tell her with what danger and annoyances his days had been filled: that police spies, in whose assiduity he recognized the work of her husband and Trevanion, shadowed his footsteps; that to excite attempts at his assassination the belief had even been disseminated that he was in league with the Austrians. Nor did he tell her that this very morning Fletcher had found posted in the open market-place a proclamation too evidently inspired by secret service agents, denouncing him as an enemy to the morals, the literature and the politics of Italy. He had long ago cautioned Tita against carrying her news of these things.

As they strolled among the dahlias, straight and tall as the oleanders in the river beds of Greece, she told him of her father's last hours, and her life in the villa, brightened only by Tita's daily visits from the casa.

"What have you been writing?" she questioned. "Has it been 'Don Juan?'"

He shook his head. The hope she had expressed—that he would some day finish it more worthily—had clung to him like ivy. With an instinct having its root deeper than his innate hatred of hypocrisy, he had forwarded the earlier cantos whose burning she had pre-

vented to John Murray in London for publication. This instinct was not kin to the bravado with which he had sent "Cain" from Venice; it was a crude but growing prescience that he must one day stand before the world by all he had written and that the destruction even of its darker pages would mutilate his life's volume. But he had not yet continued the poem. Thinking of this he sighed before he asked her:

"Have you read all the books I sent?"

"Many of them. But I liked this"—she touched the "Romeo and Juliet"—"most of all."

"It is scarce a tale for sad hours," he said, laying his hand over hers on the slim leather.

Her fingers crept into his, as she went on earnestly: "The stone you brought from Verona makes it seem so true! Do you suppose it really happened so? What do you think was the potion the monk gave her?"

"A drachm of mandragora, perhaps. That is said to produce the cataleptic trance. I wish Juliet's monk mixed his drafts in Ravenna now," he added with a touch of bitterness; "I shall often long for such a nepenthe before the next moon, Teresa."

He felt her fingers quiver. The thought of the coming long month shook her heart. "You will go from Ravenna before that," she whispered, "shall you not?"

"From the casa, perhaps. Not from near you. The day you left Casa Guiccioli I had made up my mind to leave Italy. But now—now—the only thing I see certainly is that I cannot go yet. Not till the skies are brighter for you."

"Can they ever be brighter—if you go?"

"You must not tempt me beyond my strength," he

answered, a dumb pain on his lips. "Ah, forgive me! I did not mean—"

"Tempt you! Have I done that?"

"It is my own heart tempts me—not you! It is *that* I cannot trust!"

"*I* can trust it," she said under her breath. Her eyes were luminous and tender. "It is all I have to trust now."

His strength was melting. He would have taken her into his arms, but the neigh of his tethered horse and a familiar answering whinny came across the yews.

"It is Fletcher," he said in surprise. He crossed the garden to meet him.

"What is it, Fletcher?" he demanded. "Why have you left the rooms?"

"My lord!" stammered the valet, "did you not send for me?"

"No."

Fletcher looked crestfallen.

"Who gave you such a message?"

"Count Guiccioli's secretary, your lordship."

A disquieting apprehension touched Gordon's mind. Why had Paolo sent the servant on this sleeveless errand —unless he were wished out of the way? He remembered a packet which Count Gamba, weeks before, had entrusted to him for safe-keeping. At the time Gordon had suspected its contents had to do with the *Carbonari's* plans. This packet was in his apartments. Found, might it inculpate the dead man's friends in that lost cause?

He rejoined Teresa with a hasty excuse for his return to the casa.

"You will come back?" She questioned with sudden vague foreboding.

"Yes, before sunset."

"Promise me—promise me!"

For one reassuring moment he put his arm about her, aching to fold her from all the world. The past for them both was a grim mirage, the future a blind dilemma—nay, there was no future save as it gloomed, a pregnant shadow of this present so wrought of doubt and joy.

CHAPTER XLIV

BY ORDER OF THE POPE

Nearing Casa Guiccioli, Gordon saw a crowd clustering a few paces from the entrance. Servants were watching from the balcony.

A couple of soldiers cocked their guns and would have hindered him, but he put them aside. On the pavement lay a man in uniform, shot through the breast. Over him bent a beardless adjutant feeling for a pulse, and a priest muttering a horrified prayer.

He asked a hurried question or two amid the confusion and dismay: The prostrate man was the military commandant of Ravenna. No one knew whence the shot had come a full twenty minutes before. Now his guard stood, with characteristic Italian helplessness, doing nothing, waiting orders from they knew not whom or where.

Gordon spoke authoritatively to the subaltern, bade one of the soldiers go for the police, despatched another with the news to the cardinal and directed two of the crowd to lift the injured man and carry him to his own quarters in the casa. This done he sent Fletcher for the surgeon who had attended his own wound in that same

chamber, and stationed the remaining soldiers at the lower doors. When the room was cleared he gave his attention to the unconscious commandant.

He stood a moment looking fixedly at the bed. It was this man's spies who had dogged him during the past month, persecuted his servants and attempted to raise the Ravennese against his very presence in the city. The government he served would have rejoiced to see him, Gordon, lying stretched there in the other's place; would have given but lukewarm pursuit to the assassin. Yet the man before him lay helpless enough now. Presently the casa would be full of soldiers, dragoons, priests and all the human paraphernalia of autocratic authority. Who had fired the shot? And by what strange chance, almost at his own threshold?

He crossed the floor, unlocked a drawer and took out Count Gamba's packet with satisfaction. His foot struck something on the floor.

He picked it up. It was a small leather letter-case—evidently fallen from the pocket of the wounded commandant. He took a step toward the bed, intending to replace it, and saw Tita at the door.

The latter wore no coat. He was sweaty and covered with dust. He beckoned Gordon into the next room.

"Excellence," he asked huskily; "will you not open that *portafogli?*"

"Why?"

"Perhaps to know what he knew."

"Why should I wish to know?"

"Because he was on his way here—to this casa, Excellence."

Gordon saw that he was trembling, it seemed with

both fatigue and repressed excitement. "Tell me what you know," he said.

Tita spoke rapidly, his words tumbling one against another:

"I heard Paolo send your valet after you to-day, Excellence, when no one had come from the villa. It did not seem right. I watched from the garden. I could see someone in this room—it was locked when you went. I climbed a tree. The master and one other—"

"Trevanion!"

"—I could not tell. They were carrying in boxes. When they left the casa, I got through the window and broke them open. They held bullets and cans of powder."

Gordon swept a swift glance around the room. He was beginning to understand. Ammunition, presumably for the use of the insurrectionists, here in his rooms—evidence of complicity with the *Carbonari*. A military search at the proper moment—expulsion from Italy! He distinguished the outlines clearly.

"Yes, yes," he said; "go on."

"I know the police have watched you. I guessed what it meant. I wanted to get the boxes away, but I could not—the servants would have seen me. I knew the soldiers would come soon. I climbed to the casa roof."

The narrator had paused. The paper shook in Gordon's hand. "No more, Tita!"

"It was the only way, Excellence!" said Tita, his features working. "I swore on the Virgin to guard you, whatever came. The servants ran to the balconies when—it happened. The way was clear. I carried the

boxes down to the garden. There is a covered well. They are there—where no one would look."

Gordon was staring at the letter-case, his mind struggling between revolt at the act itself and a sense of its motive. So it was for him the shot had been fired! What a ghastly levity that the wounded man should now be lying here! He shuddered. Tita's voice spoke again:

"Now, Excellence, will you read what may be in that *portafogli?*"

Gordon strode to the window and opened the case. It contained a single official letter. He unfolded and scanned it swiftly:

"Rome, Direction-General of Police.
(Most private.)

"Your Excellency:

"The Governor of Rome, in his capacity of Director-General, forwards the following:

"'With the approval of Count Guiccioli, her husband, from whom by papal decree she has been separated, it is deemed advisable since the death of her father to modify that decree, and to grant to the Contessa Guiccioli henceforth a retreat in the protection of Holy Church. You are directed herewith to arrange for her immediate conveyance to the Convent of Saint Ursula in His Holiness' estates below Rome.

"'Consalvi, Cardinal,
"'Secretary of State to Pius VII.'

"Under direction of the Cardinal of Ravenna, you will act upon this without delay.

"To the Sub-direction of Police at Ravenna."

Gordon raised his eyes with a start. Teresa—to be shut from the face of the sun, from flowers, from glad-

ness, for years, at least during the lifetime of her husband, perhaps forever? *From him?* Was this the fate he, cursed as he was, must bring upon her?

He felt his breath stop. What could he do? Take her away? How and where? "Her immediate conveyance"—"act without delay." Those were no ambiguous words; they meant more than soon. If it should be *to-day!* If authority was on its way to her, even *now,* while he dallied here!

Tita saw the deathly pallor that overspread his face like a white wave. "What is it, Excellence?" he cried.

Gordon made no reply. He dashed the *portafogli* on the floor and rushed from the room.

His horse stood at the casa entrance. He pushed past the stolid sentinel, threw himself into the saddle, and lashed the animal to an anguish of speed toward the villa.

CHAPTER XLV

THE SUMMONS

Seated amid the dahlias, Teresa, from speculation as to what had recalled Gordon to the casa, drifted into a long day-dream from which a sudden sound awoke her.

Several troopers passed along the roadway; following were two closed carriages. While she listened the wheels seemed to stop.

"It is the Mother Superior come from Bagnacavallo," she thought. As she sprang up, she heard old Elise calling. Slipping the "Romeo and Juliet" into her pocket, she went hastily into the house.

Five minutes later she stood dumb and white before three persons in the villa parlor. Two were nuns wearing the dress of the order of St. Ursula. The other she had recognized—he had visited her father in his illness—as chaplain to the Cardinal of Ravenna. A letter bearing the papal arms, dropped from her hand, lay at her feet. What it contained but one other in Ravenna besides the cardinal knew: that was the military commandant who had furnished the ecclesiastic his escort of troopers disposed outside the villa, and who at that moment was walking on another errand, straight toward a musket, filed half down, waiting on a casa roof.

"We must start without delay, Contessa." The clerical's voice fell half-compassionately. "The villa and its servants remain at present under the vice-legate's care. By direction, nothing may be taken with you save suitable apparel for the journey. We go only as far as Forli to-night."

Teresa scarcely heard. Haste—when such a little time before she had been so happy! Haste—to bid farewell *now* to the world that held *him?* In her father's death she had met the surpassing but natural misfortune of bereavement. This new blow brought a terror without presage or precedent, that seemed to grip her every sense. The convent of Saint Ursula! Not a home such as she had known at Bagnacavallo, a free abode of benignant phantom-footed monitors, but a forced retreat, a prison, secret and impregnable.

What could she do? What could she do? The question pealed in her brain as she answered dully, conscious all the time of a stinging sense of detail: the chaplain facing her; the silent *religieuses* beside him; the wrinkled face of Elise peering curiously from the hall; out of doors goldening sunlight, men's voices conversing and the stamping of horses' hoofs. Not even to see him —to tell him!

As she climbed the stair mechanically, a kind of dazed sickness in her limbs, she pictured Gordon's returning at the hour's end to find her gone forever. She sat down, her hands clenched, the nails striking purple crescents in the palms, striving desperately to think. If she could escape!

She ran to the window—a trooper stood smoking a

short pipe at the rear of the villa. She went to the staircase and called: "Elise!"

A nun ascended the stair. "The servants are receiving His Eminence's instructions," she explained. "Pray let me help you."

Teresa began to tremble. She thanked her with an effort and automatically set about selecting a few articles of clothing. The apathy of hopelessness was upon her.

The chaplain stood at the foot of the stair when they descended. Seeing him waiting, the sharper pain reswept her. Only to bridge that time—to see Gordon again, if but for an instant, before she went. She stopped, searching his face.

"I should like a little while alone before I go. There is time for that, is there not?"

His grave face lighted, the authoritative merged instantly in the fatherly solicitude of the shepherd of souls. He thought she longed for the supreme consolation of prayer.

"A half-hour if you wish it, my daughter. The chapel —shall it not be?" He led the way. Elise sat weeping in a chair; as they passed she snatched Teresa's hand and kissed it silently.

From the side steps a tunnelled yew walk curved to a door in one of the villa's narrow wings. This wing, which had no connection with the rest of the house, had been added by Count Gamba as a chapel for Teresa's mother. It was scrupulously kept, and during all the years since her death bowls of fresh flowers had scented it daily and two candles had been kept burning before the crucifix over its cushioned altar. The attic above

Count Gamba had used as a laboratory for his unending chemical experiments. It was there the message had found him which had brought so cruel a result.

The churchman paused at the chapel door, and Teresa entered alone. He closed it behind her.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE POTION

The declining sun shone dimly through the painted windows. The chapel was in half-dark. Teresa went slowly to where the two candles winked yellowly. She had often knelt there, but she brought now no thought of prayer. Might Gordon come in time? Would his errand at the casa delay him? Could fate will that she should miss him by such a narrow margin? She crouched suddenly down on the altar cushions, dry, tearless sobs tearing at her throat.

She felt the book in her pocket and drew it out.

Only that morning she had found the letter written in it—only an hour ago their hands had touched together on its cover. How truly now Juliet's plight seemed like her own! But she, alas! had no friendly monk nor magic elixir. There were no such potions nowadays. What was it Gordon had said? Mandragora—a drachm of mandragora? If she only had some now!

She caught her breath.

In another minute she was stumbling up the narrow curling stair to the loft above.

Ten minutes later she stood in the center of the laboratory, lined with its shelves of crooked-necked retorts and

bottles, her search ended, the blood shrinking from her heart, her hand clutching a small phial.

Gasping, she seized a slender graduated glass and hurried down. She ran to the chapel door and fastened it, hearing while she slid the bolt, the steps of the cleric pacing up and down without.

As she stood again at the altar, the phial in her hand, a bleak fear crossed her soul. What if it had never been anything but a story? Perhaps Juliet had never awakened really, but had died when she drank the potion! Suppose it were a poison, from which there *was* no awaking!

She shivered as if with cold. Better even that than life—without *him!*

Perhaps, too, Gordon had jested or had been mistaken. It might have been some other drug—some other quantity.

Another dread leaped upon her out of the shadow. Suppose it were the right drug—that its effect would be as he had said. What, then? In her agony she had thought only of escape from the hour's dilemma. There would be an afterward. And who would know she only slept? She dared not trust to Elise—her fright would betray her. She dared not leave a writing lest other eyes than Gordon's should see and understand. Suppose she did it, and it succeeded, and he came afterward. He would deem her dead in truth,—that was what Romeo had thought!—a victim of her own despair. They would bear her to the Gamba vault cold and coffined, to wake beside her father, without Juliet's hope of rescue. Her brain rocked with hysterical terror. If Gordon only knew, she would dare all—dare that worst. But how

could she let him know? Even if he were here now she would have neither time nor opportunity. Her half-hour of grace was almost up.

Yet—if he saw her lying there, apparently lifeless, and beside her that book and phial—would he remember what he had said? Would he guess? Oh God, *would he?*

A warning knock sounded at the chapel door.

"Blessed Virgin, help me!" whispered Teresa, poured the drachm and drank it.

Then with a sob she stretched herself on the altar cushions and laid the "Romeo and Juliet" open on her breast.

When finally—his wonder and indignation having given place to apprehension—the chaplain employed a dragoon's stout shoulder to force the chapel door, he distinguished at first only emptiness.

He approached the altar to start back with an exclamation of dismay at what he saw stretched in the candle-light.

He laid a faltering hand on Teresa's; it was already chilled. He raised her eyelid—the pupil was expanded to the iris' edge. He felt her pulse, her heart. Both were still. A cry of horror broke from his lips, as he saw a phial lying uncorked beside her. He picked it up, noting the far-faint halitus of the deadly elixir.

His cry brought Elise, with the nuns behind her. The old woman pushed past the peering trooper and rushed to throw herself beside the altar with a wail of lamentation.

The chaplain lifted her and drew her away.

"Go back to the house," he bade her sternly; "let no servant enter here till word comes from Casa Guiccioli." He waved the black-gowned figures back to the threshold. "She is self-slain!" he said.

In the confusion none of them had seen a man enter the garden from the side, who, hearing the first alarm, had swiftly approached the chapel. No one had seen him enter the open door behind them.

The churchman, with that solemn pronouncement on his lips, stopped short at Gordon's white, awe-frosted face. There was not true sight but rather a woeful congealed vision in those eyes turned upon the altar; they seemed those of a soul in whom the abrupt certainty of perdition has sheathed itself unawares.

The chaplain drew back. He recognized the man who had come so suddenly to meet that scene. A dark shadow crossed his face. Then muttering a prayer, he followed the nuns to the carriages to bear back the melancholy news to Ravenna.

CHAPTER XLVII

THE COMPLICITY OF THE GODS

"Self-slain!" The words of the priest, as Gordon stood there, seemed to reëcho about him with infinite variations of agony. He had ridden vacant of purpose, destitute of plan—thrilling only to reach her. Desperate, lawless thoughts had rung through his mind as he galloped. Entering the garden he had seen the carriages and heard the chaplain's cry at the same moment. Then, with the awful instantaneousness of an electric bolt, the blow had fallen. It was the last finality—the closure of the ultimate gateway of hope—the utter assurance of the unescapable doom in which all ends save the worm that dies not and the fire that is not quenched.

He drew closer to the altar, his step dragging as he walked—his infirmity grown all at once painfully apparent—and gazed at the mute face on the cushions. The priest and his escort were forgotten. He knew nothing save that dreadful assertion that had sent the nuns hastily from the door, telling their beads, and had forbidden even the servant to enter.

Self-slain? No, but slain by George Gordon—the accursed bearer of all *maranatha,* damned to the last jot and tittle. He had done her to death as surely as if his own hand had held the phial lying there to her lips. It

was because he had stayed in Ravenna that she lay here dead before the crucifix—the symbol that she had sought at San Lazzarro, that Padre Somalian had prayed to!

Staring across hueless wastes of mental torture to a blank horizon, something the friar had said came to him: "Every man bears a cross of despair to his Calvary." What a vacuous futility! Infinity, systems, worlds, man, brain. Was this the best the æon-long evolution could offer? This bloodless image nailed upon a tree? What had it availed *her?*

He suddenly fell on his knees beside her. Dead? Teresa dead? Why, a few months before, at the monastery, he had regarded death for himself with calmness, almost with satisfaction. But not for her—never for her. Was *she* dead, and he to live on—never to see her, to hear her speak, not even to know that she was somewhere in the world?

He saw for the first time the little book lying open on her breast in the candle-light. He took it mechanically and turned its leaves. As mechanically his eye read, not sensible of what it translated, but as surcharged agony unconsciously seeks relief in the doing of simple, habitual things:

> "When presently through all thy veins shall run
> A cold and drowsy humor; for no pulse
> Shall keep his native progress, but surcease:
> No warmth, no breath, shall testify thou livest;
> The roses in thy lips and cheeks shall fade
> To paly ashes; thy eyes' windows fall,
> Like death, when he shuts up the day of life!
> And in this borrowed likeness of shrunk death
> Thou shalt continue two and forty hours,
> And then awake as from a pleasant sleep."

The last words of the monk Gordon repeated aloud: "And then awake as from a pleasant sleep."

A sudden tingling sensation leaped through every nerve. He snatched at the phial and bent to its label—"Mandragora."

"With an inarticulate cry he sprang up, leaped to the nearest window and smashed it frantically with his fist. The splintering glass cut his hand, but he did not feel it. He caught a fragment as it fell, and in a second was holding it close over Teresa's parted lips.

He waited a time that seemed a dragging eternity, then lifted it to the candle-light and looked with fearful earnestness. The faintest tarnish, light as gossamer film, clouded it.

The crystal clashed upon the floor. He seized and emptied one of the rose bowls and rushed out through the darkening flower-paths to the fountain in the garden. Goldfish flirted and glistened in panic as he filled the bowl with the icy water. He hurried back, dipped Teresa's stirless hands into its coldness and dashed it over her face, drenching her white neck and the dull gold hair meshed on the velvet.

Three separate times he did this. Then, breathless, he seized her arms and began to move them as one resuscitates a half-drowned person, trying to rouse the lungs to action to throw off the lethal torpor of the belladonna-like opiate.

He worked for many minutes, the moisture running from his forehead, his breath coming in gasps. Laboring, he thought of the dire risk she had run, trusting all to his promise to return and to his divination. He re-

membered he had said a drachm. To make assurance doubly sure, might she have taken more?

He kept watching her features—the rigor seemed to be loosening, the marble rigidity softening its outlines. But heart and pulse were still. In despair he laid his warm lips close upon her cold ones and filled her lungs with a great expiration, again and again.

He lifted himself, trembling now with hope. The lungs, responding to that forced effort, had begun to renew their function. Her bosom rose and fell—slowly, but still it was life. He dried her face and chafed her hands between his own. She commenced to breathe more naturally and rhythmically; at length she sighed and stirred on the cushions.

A rush of tears blinded Gordon's eyes—the first he had shed since the night in London when he had bent above the little empty snow-silent bed that had held Ada. He dashed them away, seeing that Teresa's eyes were open.

Her hand, wavering, touched his wet cheek.

"My love!" he said. "My love!"

The first fact that came to her out of the void was that of his tears. A troubled look crossed her brow.

"All is well. Do you remember?"

Her eyes, roaming at first bewildered, saw the dark chapel, the flaring, garish candles, caught the expression of his face, still drawn and haggard, and white with strain. All came back upon her in a surge. She half raised herself, his arm supporting her. They two there alone—the priest gone—the dusk fallen to night. She had succeeded! Gordon had come—his arms held her!

In the joyful revulsion, she turned her face to him

and threw her arms about his neck, feeling herself caught up in his embrace, every fiber shuddering with the terror passed, weeping with weak delight, clinging to him as to her only refuge, still dizzy and faint, but with safe assurance and peace.

Looking down at her where she rested, her face buried on his breast, her whole form shaken with feeling, murmuring broken words, slowly calling back her strength, Gordon felt doubt and indecision drop from his mind. The convent was not for her—not by all she had suffered that day! Only one thing else remained: to take her away forever, beyond the papal frontier—with *him!* Fate and the world had given her to him now by the resistless logic of circumstance.

He reckoned swiftly:

The news by this time had reached the casa in Ravenna. Another half-hour at most and choice would be taken from their hands. They must lose no time. Yet whither? Where could he go, that hatred would not pursue? To what Ultima Thule could he fly, that the poison barb would not follow to wound her happiness? Where to live? Never in England! In the East,—in Greece, perhaps, the land of his youthful dreams? It was a barbarian *pashawlik,* under the foot of Ottoman greed; neither a fit nor secure habitation. In Italy, where her soul must always be? Tuscany—Pisa, where Shelley lived—was not far distant. They might reach its borders in safety. There they would be beyond the rule of Romagna, out of the states of the Church.

"Dearest," asked Gordon, "are you strong enough to ride?"

She stirred instantly in his arms and stood up, though

unsteadily. "Yes, yes, some one will come. We must go quickly."

"I will saddle and fetch a horse for you to the chapel door."

She was feeling the sharp edge of fear again. "I shall be quite strong presently," she assured him. "Let us wait no longer."

He went noiselessly to the stables. He had dreaded meeting some one, but old Elise, beside herself with grief, had run to watch for those who should come from Ravenna, and the rest of the servants, dazed by the calamity, were huddled in the kitchen. Leading the horse, Gordon returned speedily.

He put his arms about Teresa in the chapel doorway for an instant and held her close. He was feeling a call he had never felt before, the call that nature and civilization have planted in man deep as the desire for offspring, the song of the silver-singing goddess, whose marble image, on the night he had made that fatal trothing with Annabel, had been blackened by his thrown ink-well—Vesta, the personification of the hearthstone, of home.

Teresa suddenly meant that to him. Home! Not such a one as he had known at Newstead Abbey, with Hobhouse and Sheridan and Moore. Not a gray moated pile wound with the tragic fates of his own blood—a house of mirth, but not of happiness! Not like the one in Piccadilly Terrace, where he had lived with Annabel that one year of fever and heart-sickness and fading ideals! No, but a home that should be no part of his past; a nook enisled, where spying eyes might not enter,

where he should redeem those barren pledges he had once made to life, in the coin of real love.

"Teresa," he said, "from the journey we begin this hour there can be no return. It is out of the world you have lived in and known! If there were any other way for you—save that one—"

"My life!" she whispered.

The soft-voiced passion of her tenderness thrilled him. "You go to exile," he went on, "to an alien place—"

"There is no exile, except from you, nor alien place where you are! The world that disowns you may cast me out—ah, I shall be glad!"

He laughed a low laugh of utter content. Lightly as if she had been a child, he lifted her into the saddle. Supporting her at first, he led the horse over the turf and into the driveway where his own waited.

Then mounting, his hand holding her bridle, they rode into the velvety dark.

Old Elise, tearfully watching the Ravenna road, heard horses coming from the villa grounds. From the selvedge of the hedge, she saw the faces of Teresa and Gordon, pallid in the starlight.

The old woman's breath failed her. All the servants' tales of the Englishman, whom she had seen at the casa, recurred to her superstitious imagination. He was a fiend, carrying off the dead body of her mistress!

She crouched against the ground, palsied with fright, till the muffled hoof-beats died away. Then she rose and ran, stumbling with fear, to the house.

As Gordon and Teresa rode through the azure gloom of the Italian night, a girlish moon was tilting over the distant purple of the mountains, beyond whose

many-folded fastnesses lay Tuscany and Pisa. Her weakness had passed and she kept her saddle more certainly. The darkness was friendly; before the sun rose they would be beyond pursuit.

As the villa slipped behind them and the odorous forest shut them round, Gordon rode closer and clasped her in his arms with a rush of joy, straining her tight to him, feeling the fervid beating of her heart, his own exulting with the fierce, primordial flame of possession.

"Mine!" he cried. "My very own at last—now and always."

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE ALL OF LOVE

Spring, the flush wooer, was come again. The prints of gentian showed where his blue-sandalled feet had trod, and the wild plum and cherry blooms announced the earth his bride. In the tranquil streets of Pisa, where the chains of red-liveried convicts toiled not, young grass sprouted. Beneath a sky serenely, beautifully blue, the yellow Arno bore its lazy sails under still bridges and between bright houses, green-shuttered against the sun. Round about lay new corn-fields busy with scarlet-bodiced peasants, forests and hills sagy-green with olive, and further off the clear Carrara peaks and the solemn hoary Apennines. At night a breeze fragrant as wood-smoke, cooling the myrtle hedges flecked with the first pale-green meteors of the fireflies.

The few English residents had long grown used to the singular figure of Shelley, beardless and hatless, habited like a boy in stinted jacket and trousers—that mild philosopher at war with the theories of society; a fresher *divertissement* had stirred them when the old Lanfranchi Palace, built by Michael Angelo, on the Lung' Arno, was thrown open in the autumn for a new occu-

pant—a man whose striking face and halting step made him marked. The news flew among the gossips in a day.

George Gordon was not alone, it was whispered over indignant tea-cups; with him was a Ravennese contessa who had eloped by his aid out of Romagna. Report averred that he had duelled with her husband, and after spiriting her beyond the frontier, had returned to Ravenna to shoot down a military commandant who had attempted to interfere. Luckily for him, the story ran, the official had recovered, and the police, relieved to be quit of him, had allowed the execrated peer to depart unmolested with his chattels. For a time the Lanfranchi neighborhood was avoided, but at length, curiosity overcame rigid decorum; femininity forgot its prudence and watched with open eagerness.

Its reward, however, was meager. Except for Shelley and his young wife, Gordon chose seclusion even from the Italian circles, where title was an open sesame and uninsular laxity not unforgiven. This fact became unmistakable when a billet from no less a personage than the grand duchess, a princess of the House of Saxony, brought from the Lanfranchi Palace a clear declination. The gossips held up their hands and subsided.

For the primal object of this curiosity the winter, with its thaws and siroccos, had passed swiftly. In the present, so full of sweet surprise and unfolding, even Teresa's long anxiety because of her brother's non-appearance and the boding with which Gordon watched for a sign from Trevanion, or from Count Guiccioli—who he knew would read rightly the enigma of her reputed death and after disappearance—had softened finally to an undisturbed content.

The full measure of love was theirs. The outer world, with its myriad intonations, had dulled away, and Pisa and the old Lanfranchi pile constituted an inner roseate haven belonging wholly and only to themselves. A cloistered city, its old grandeur departed and seemingly but half inhabited; the river drifting by, the house of the Shelleys on the opposite bank; boats and horses; a garden sweet with orange-trees and gushes of violets along shady walks; a few servants marshalled by Fletcher and Tita; a study and books—and Teresa. It was the home Gordon had dreamed of when his arms were around her at the villa chapel, but more satisfying, more complete.

Sometimes, in this Elysian life of theirs, as he felt her head against his knee while he read her new verses of his, —for now he knew oftener the old melodic pen-mood that at Venice had seemed vanished forever and that had first returned in the hour he had etched those lines on the fungus,—he was conscious of a sudden tightening of the heart. Could it last? The poison of his fame had gone deep. He lived at peace only by sufferance of military authority, now busy avenging its late alarm by the black-sentence and proscription. At any moment it might recommence in Tuscany the persecution with which the police of Romagna had visited him: the yelping terriers of the Continental press, a upas-growth of *procés-verbal,* recrimination, hateful surveillance.

Entering his restful study one day from a gallop with Shelley, Gordon wondered whether this retreat, too— whether each retreat he might find—would in the end be denied him and he condemned, a modern son of Shem, to pitch his tent in the wilderness.

For himself it did not matter; but for her? She was

happy now—only with him, even if beyond the pale. But could she always remain so? Drop by drop, as erosion wears the quartz, would not the trickling venom waste her soul? Were the specters of that further past when his life had run, like a burning train, through wanderings, adventure and passion—the ghosts of his own weaknesses and wilful tempers—not laid? Could they stalk into this halcyon present to pluck them asunder?

The ghosts of *his own weaknesses!* Clarity of vision had come to Gordon in these months. He had grown to see his old acts, not gaunt and perverse, projections of insistent caprice, but luminous with new self-solution. He had learned himself: what he had never known, either in his London life of success and failure, or in its ignoble Venetian aftermath.

Looking out toward the purpling Apennines, where the sun sank to his crimson covert, he felt a mute aching wish: an intense desire that the world—not his contemporaries, but a later generation—should be able to look beneath the specious shadow of opprobrium that covered him and see the truth.

It could do this only through himself; through pages he should write. The journals he had kept in London, when he had lived centered in a tremulous web of sensitiveness and wayward idiosyncrasy, had recorded his many-sided, prismatic personality only in fragments, torn, jagged morsels of his brain. In these memoirs he should strive to paint justly the old situations for which he had been judged. And these pages would persist, a cloud of witnesses, when he was beyond earthly summons and verdict.

When Teresa entered the room in a mist-white gown, his face was bent close to the paper, the candles yet unlighted. Coming close to him, she seated herself at his feet. He bent and kissed her in silence; the trooping visions the writing had recalled made his kiss lingeringly tender.

She pointed out of the window, through the million-tinted twilight.

"Do you remember, dear," she asked, her voice thrilling him strangely, "when we rode to those mountains, you and I, from Ravenna?"

"Yes," he replied, smiling.

She had turned toward him, kneeling, her hands caressing his clustering brown-gray curls.

"You have never regretted that ride?"

"Regretted it? Ah, Teresa!"

Her face was looking up into his, a wistful questioning in it—almost like pain, he thought wonderingly.

"You know all you said that night," she went on hurriedly; "what I was to you? Is it as true now?"

"It is more true," he answered. "All I have dreamed, all I have written here in Pisa—and some of it will live, Teresa—has had its source in you. All that I shall ever write will spring from your love! That began to be true the day you first kissed me."

"That was when you found me on the convent hill, when we read from the Bible—the day I first knew of Allegra."

His face was averted, but she could see his shoulders lift and fall in a deep silent suspiration.

"Your forgiveness then was divine!" he said. Not

such had been the forgiveness of the world! He clasped her in his arms. "You are all things to me!"

"Oh," she cried with a broken breath, "can I be *all* to you?"

"Wife and home and happiness—all!"

"—And child?" She was sobbing now.

He started, feeling her arms straining him, seeing her blinded with tears. There suddenly seemed a woeful significance in what she had said—in her question. He felt the surging of some unexpected wave of dread which broke over his heart and washed it up in his throat.

"Dearest! Two days ago I heard there was fever in the Bagnacavallo valley. I sent a courier at once. He has just returned. Gordon—how can I tell you?"

For an instant she was frightened at his stony stillness. In the dusk a mortal grayness spread itself over his features. He pushed back his chair as if to rise, but could not for her arms. It was not Allegra's illness—it was more, it was the worst! His arms dropped to his sides. A shudder ran through him.

"I understand," he said at length. "I understand. Say no more."

In the words was not now the arrogant and passionate hostility of the old George Gordon. There was the deadly quietness of grief, but also something more. In that moment of numbing intelligence it was borne in upon him with searing force, that death, perhaps, had acted not unkindly, that it had chosen well. What perils might that young life have held, springing from those lawless elements compounded in her nature: recklessness, audacity, the roving berserker foot, contempt for

the world's opinion, demoniac passions of hatred and reprisal? The subtle, unerring divination of death had taken her in youthfulness, a heavened soul, from the precincts of that past of his to which nothing pure should have a mortal claim.

So he thought, as feeling Teresa's arms about him, his lips repeated more slowly and with a touch of painful resignation—the first he had felt in all his life:

"I understand!"

That was all. He was looking out across the mistily-moving Arno, silent, his hand on her bowed head. She lifted it after a time, feeling the silence acutely. Her eyes, swimming with changeless love and pitying tenderness, called his own.

At the wordless appeal, a swift rush of unshed tears burned his eyelids. "Death has done his work," he said in a low voice. "Time, perhaps, may do his. Let us mention her no more."

Just then both heard a noise on the stairway—the choked voice of Fletcher and a vengeful oath.

Teresa sprang to her feet with a sharp exclamation.

Gordon rose and threw open the door.

CHAPTER XLIX

"YOU ARE AIMING AT MY HEART!"

The two men who burst into the room had been intimately yet appositively connected with Gordon's past. One had tried to take his life with a Malay kriss; the life of the other Gordon had once saved. They were Trevanion and Count Pietro Gamba, Teresa's brother.

The former had come many times stealthily to Pisa; for the master of Casa Guiccioli, cheated of his dearest plan, had had recourse to the umbrage of Tuscan officialism. On this day, as it happened, Trevanion had been closeted with the police commandant when that official had been called upon to visé the passports of two strangers: Prince Mavrocordato, a tall commanding Greek, and a slighter, blond-bearded Italian, at whose name the listener had started—with the leap of a plan to his brain. Trevanion had followed the young Count Gamba to his hotel, picked acquaintance and, pretending ignorance of the other's relationship, had soon told him sufficient for his purpose: that the young and lovely Contessa Guiccioli, lured from Ravenna and her husband, was living at that moment in Pisa—the light-of-love of an English noble whose excesses in Venice had given him the appellation of the *milord maligno*.

The story had turned the brother's blood to fire. All he

demanded was to be shown the man. Trevanion led him to the palace, where only Fletcher had met their entry, and now the opening of a door had brought this winged vengeance and its object face to face.

The sight of her long-absent brother—Trevanion behind him—the pistol the former held levelled at Gordon's breast—froze Teresa with sudden comprehension. She stood stock-still, unable to utter a word. Trevanion sprang forward, his finger pointing.

"There he is!" he spat savagely. "There's your Englishman!"

Gordon had made no move. Unarmed, resistance would have been futile in presence of the poised weapon. So this was the way that lurking Nemesis of his past was to return to him! He was looking, not at Trevanion, but at his companion, fixedly; recalling, with an odd sensation of the unreal, a windy lake with that face settling helplessly in the ripples as he swam toward it, the water roaring in his ears. The *outré* thought flashed across him how sane and just the homilists of England would call it that he should meet his end in such inglorious fashion at the hands of this particular man.

"You white-livered fool!" scoffed Trevanion. "Why don't you shoot?"

His companion had paused, eying Gordon in astounded inquiry. His outstretched arm wavered.

The paralysis of Teresa's fear broke at the instant. She ran to him, throwing her arms around him, snatching at the hand that held the pistol.

"Pietro! Pietro!" she screamed. "Ah, God of love! Hear me, first! Hear me!"

He thrust her to her knees, and again, as Trevanion

sneered, his arm stiffened. But the negative of that Genevan picture was before his eyes, too—its tones reversed. He saw himself rising from the beach clasping the hand of his rescuer—heard his own voice say: "You have given me my life; I shall never forget it!"

His arm fell.

"Signore," said Gordon steadily, "I long ago released you from any fancied obligation."

"Pietro!" Teresa's voice was choked with agony. "It is not him alone you would kill! You are aiming at my heart, too! Pietro!"

Amazedly, as she staggered to her feet, she saw her brother hurl the pistol through the open window and cover his face with his hands.

Trevanion stared, almost believing Gordon an adept in some superhuman *diablerie,* by which in the moment of revenge he had robbed this cat's-paw of courage. Then laughing shrilly and wildly, he turned and lurched past Fletcher—leaning against the wall, dazed from the blow that had sent him reeling from the landing—down the stair.

In the street he picked up the fallen pistol. The touch of the cool steel ran up his arm. He turned back, a devilish purpose in his eye. Why not glut his hate once and for all? He had tried before, and failed. Why not now, more boldly? Italian justice would make only a pretense of pursuit. Yet British law had a long reach. Its ships were in every quarter of the globe. And Gordon, above all else, was a peer.

A sudden memory made his flesh creep. He remembered once having seen a murderer executed in Rome. It came back to him as he stood with the weapon in his

hand: the masked priests; the half-naked executioner; the bandaged criminal; the black Christ and his banner; the slow procession, the scaffold, the soldiery, the bell ringing the *misericordia;* the quick rattle and fall of the ax.

Shuddering, he flung the pistol into the river with an imprecation.

Looking up he saw a gaitered figure that moved briskly along the street, to stop at the Lanfranchi doorway. Trevanion recognized the severely cut clerical costume, the clean-shaven face with its broad scar, the queerish, insect-like, inquisitive eyes. He glanced down the river with absurd apprehension, half expecting to see His Majesty's ship *Pylades* anchored in its muddy shallows—the ship from which he had deserted at Bombay once upon a time, at the cost of that livid scar on Dr. Cassidy's cheek.

He had shrunk from Cassidy's observation in the lights of a London street; but in Italy he had no fear. He looked the naval surgeon boldly in the face, as he passed on to the police barracks.

In the room from which Trevanion had rushed, Teresa put her hand on her brother's arm. Back of Gordon's only words and his own involuntary and unexpected action, she had divined some joyful circumstance of which she was ignorant. What it was she was too relieved to care.

"Come," she said gently; "we have much to say to each other."

She sent one swift glance at Gordon; then the door closed between them.

CHAPTER L

CASSIDY FINDS A LOST SCENT

On Gordon, in the shock of the fatal news Teresa had brought, the menace of that fateful onslaught had fallen numbly. No issue at that moment would have mattered greatly to himself. But in her piteous cry: "You are aiming at my heart," he had awakened. That parting glance, shining with fluctuant love, relief and assurance, told him what that tragedy might have meant to her. Absorbed in his grief he had scarcely cared, had scarcely reckoned, of her.

As he stood alone the thought stung him like a sword. He remembered with what tenderness she had tried to blunt the edge of her mournful message.

His reverie passed with the entrance of Fletcher, still uncertain on his feet, and with a look of vast relief at the placid appearance of the apartment. A messenger brought a request from the Rev. Dr. Nott, a name well-known to Gordon in London. The clergyman, just arrived in Pisa, asked the use of the ground floor of the Lanfranchi Palace—he understood it was unoccupied—in which to hold service on the following Sunday.

Over the smart of his sorrow, the wraith of a satiric smile touched Gordon's lips. He, the unelect and unre-

generate, to furnish a tabernacle for Pisan orthodoxy? The last sermon he had read was one preached by a London divine and printed in an English magazine; its text was his drama of "Cain," and it held him up to the world as a denaturalized being, who, having drained the cup of sensual sin to its bitterest dregs, was resolved, in that apocalypse of blasphemy, to show himself a cool, unconcerned fiend.

And yet, after all, the request was natural enough. The palace that housed him was the most magnificent in Pisa, in proportions almost a castle. And, in fact, the lower floor was empty and unused. Was he to mar this saner existence, in which he felt waking those old inspirations and ideals, with the crude spirit of combativeness in which his bruised pride took refuge when popular clamor thrust him from his kind? If he refused, would not the very refusal be made a further weapon against him?

Had Gordon seen the mottled clerical countenance that waited for answer in the street below he might have read a partial answer to this question.

Cassidy's ship having anchored at Leghorn, he had embraced the opportunity to distribute a few doctrinal tracts among the English residents of this near cathedral town. Of Gordon's life in Pisa he heard before he left the ship. In the Rev. Dr. Nott he had found an accidental travelling companion with an eye single to the glory of the Established Church, who was even then bemoaning the lack of spiritual advantages in the town to which he was bound. His zealous soul rejoiced in the acquaintance and fostered it on arrival. The idea of Sabbath service in English had been the clergyman's;

that of the Lanfranchi Palace as a place wherein to gather the elect, had been Cassidy's. The suggestion was not without a certain genius. To the doctor's uplifted hands he had remarked with unction that to ask could do no harm; and the request, even if refused, might be precious seed sown. Cassidy mentally presaged refusal—which should make text and material for future discourse of his own.

Waiting at the Lanfranchi entrance he remembered a sermon of which he had delivered himself years before at Newstead Abbey—perched upon a table. He had never forgotten it. He touched his lips with his tongue at the pious thought that he who had then been master of the Abbey—host of that harebrained crew who afterward made him a butt of egregious ridicule in London—was now spurned of the righteous.

Gordon at that hour had no thought of Cassidy, whom he had not seen in years. "Say to the messenger that Mr. Nott is very welcome to the use of the floor," was the answer he gave the valet.

A moment later Teresa and Count Pietro Gamba reentered. Teresa's eyes were wet and shining. Her brother's face was calm. He came frankly to Gordon and held out his hand.

While the two men clasped hands, the naval surgeon was ruminating in chagrin. Gordon's courteous assent gave him anything but satisfaction. He took it to Dr. Nott's lodgings.

As Cassidy set foot in the street again he stopped suddenly and unaccountably. At the Lanfranchi portal in the dusk he had had a view of a swarthy face that roused a persistent, baffling memory. The unanticipated

reply to the message he had carried had jarred the puzzle from his mind. It recurred again now, and with a sudden stab of recollection. His teeth shut together with a snap.

He lay awake half that night. At sun-up he was on his way back to Leghorn, with a piece of news for the commander of the *Pylades*.

CHAPTER LI

DR. NOTT'S SERMON

It was a thirsty afternoon. Teresa and Mary Shelley —the latter, bonneted and gloved—sat at an upper window of the palace, watching through the Venetian blinds the English residents of Pisa approaching by twos and threes the entrance below them.

Dr. Nott's service had been well advertised, and a pardonable curiosity to gain a view, however limited, of the palace's interior, swelled the numbers. Besides this, one of the Lanfranchi servants had had an unlucky *fracas* with a police sergeant which, within a few hours of its occurrence, rumor had swollen to a formidable and bloody affray: Gordon had mortally wounded two police dragoons and taken refuge in his house, guarded by bulldogs; he had been captured after a desperate resistance; forty brace of pistols had been found in the palace. These tales had been soon exploded, but the affair nevertheless possessed an interest on this Sunday afternoon.

The pair at the window conversed on various topics: Pietro, the new member of the household, and his rescue in Lake Geneva, of which Mary had told Teresa; Prince Mavrocordato, his patron, exiled from Wallachia,

and watching eagerly the plans of the primates, now shaping to revolution, in Greece, his native country; Shelley's new sail-boat, the *Ariel,* anchored at the river-bank, a stone's throw from where they sat. As they talked they could hear from the adjoining study Gordon's voice reading aloud and the sharp, eager, explosive tones of Shelley as he commented or admired.

Both watchers at length fell silent. The sight of the people below, soberly frocked and coated, so unmistakably British in habiliment and demeanor, had brought pensive thoughts to Mary Shelley of the England and Sabbaths of her girlhood. Teresa was thinking of Gordon.

Since the hour he had learned that melancholy news from Bagnacavallo he had not spoken of Allegra, but there had been a look in his face that told how sharply the blow had pierced.

If there had been a lurking jealousy of his past in which she had no part, it had vanished forever when he had said, with that patient pathos that wrung her heart: "I understand." The words then had roused in her something even deeper than the maternal instinct that had budded when she took him wounded to Casa Guiccioli, deeper than the utter joy with which she had felt his arms as they rode through the night from the villa where he had waked her from that deathlike coma. It was a sense of more intimate comprehension to which her whole being had vibrated ever since.

Not but that she was conscious of struggles in him that she did not fully grasp. But to-day, as she sat silent by the window, her heart was saying: "His old life is gone—gone! I belong to his new life. I will

love him so that he will forget! We shall live always in Italy together, and he will write poems that the whole world will read. And some day it will know him as I do!"

The sound of a slow hymn rose from the floor below, and Teresa's companion stole to the hall where the words came clearly up the marble staircase:

> "O spirit of the living God,
> In all Thy plenitude of grace,
> Where'er the foot of man hath trod,
> Descend on our apostate race."

As Mary listened, Teresa came and stood beside her. Convent bred, religion to her had meant churchings, candled processionals and adorations before the crucifix which hung always above her bed. Her mind direct, imaginative, yet with a natural freedom from traditional constraint, suffered for the home-nurtured ceremony left behind in her flight with Gordon. But her new experience retained a sense of devotion deeper because more primitive and instinctive than these: a mystic leaning out toward good intelligences all about her—the pure longing with which she had framed the prayer for Gordon so long ago. She listened eagerly now, not only because of the priestly suggestion in the sound, but also from a thought that the ceremony below had been a part of his England.

This was in her mind as a weighty voice intoned the opening sentences, to drop presently to the recitation of the collect for the day.

While thus absorbed, Gordon and Shelley came and

leaned with them at the top of the stair. The congregation was responding now to the Litany:

"From all blindness of heart; from pride, vainglory and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness,

"Good Lord, deliver us."

It was not alone Mary Shelley to whom memories were hastening. The chant recalled to Gordon, with a singular, minute distinctness, the dreary hours in the Milbanke pew in the old church at Seaham, where he had passed that "treacle-moon" with Annabel. Blindness of heart, hatred, uncharitableness: he had known all these.

"From lightning and tempest—"

One phase of his old life was lifting before him startlingly clear: the phase that confounded the precept with the practice and resented hypocrisy by a wholesale railing at dogma—the sneer with which the philosophic Roman shrugged at the Galilean altars. The ancient speculation had fallen in the wreck at Venice—to rise again one sodden dawn in the La Mira forest. The discarded images had re-arisen then, but with new outlines. They still framed skepticism, but it was desponding, not scoffing—a hopelessness whose climax was reached in his soul's bitter cry to Padre Somalian at San Lazzarro: *"If it were only true!"* Since, he had learned the supreme awakening of love which had already aroused his conscience, and now in its development, that

love, lighting and warming his whole field of human sympathy, made him conscious of appetences hitherto unguessed.

"That it may please Thee to forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and turn their hearts;

"We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord."

Gordon neither smiled now nor frowned.

The chant died while the visitors said their adieus. The feeling of estrangement had been deepening in Shelley's fair-haired wife. For a moment she had been back in old St. Giles'-in-the-Fields, whither she had gone so often of a Sunday from William Godwin's musty book-shop. She put her hand on Shelley's arm.

"Bysshe," she whispered, "let us stop a while as we go down. It seems so like old times. We can slip in at the back and leave before the rest. Will you?"

Shelley looked ruefully at his loose nankeen trousers, his jacket sleeves worn from handling the tiller, and shook his tangled hair, but seeing her wistful expression, acquiesced.

"Very well, Mary," he said; "come along." He followed her, shrugging his shoulders.

At the entrance of the impromptu audience-room, Mary drew back uncertainly. The benches had been so disposed that the late-comers found themselves fronting the side of the audience and the center of curious eyes. Shelley colored at the scrutiny, but it was too late to retire, and they seated themselves in the rear.

At the moment of their entry the Rev. Dr. Nott, in

cassock and surplice, having laid off the priest (he was an exact high-churchman) was kissing the center of the preacher's stole. He settled the garment on his shoulders with satisfaction. He had been annoyed at the disappearance of Cassidy, on whose aid he had counted for many preliminary details, but the presence of the author of "Queen Mab" more than compensated. This would indeed be good seed sown. He proceeded with zeal to the text of his sermon:

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."

A flutter winged among the benches and the blood flew to Mary's cheek as he doled the words a second time.

With his stay in the town, the clergyman's concern had grown at the toleration with which it regarded the presence of this reprobated apostle of hellish unbelief. The thought had been strong in his mind as he wrote his sermon. This was an opportunity to sound the alarum of faith. His face shone with ardor.

The doctor possessed a vocabulary. His voice was sonorous, his vestments above reproach. He was under the very roof of Asteroth, with the visible presence of anti-Christ before his eyes. The situation was inspiratory. From a brief judicial arraignment of skepticism, he launched into allusions unmistakably personal, beneath which Mary Shelley sat quivering with resentment, her softer sentiment of *lang syne* turned to bitter regret. Furtive glances were upon the pair; Pisa—the English part of it—was enjoying a new sensation.

A pained, flushing wonder was in Shelley's diffident, bright eyes as the clergyman, with outstretched arm, thundered toward them the warning of Paul:

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world! Their throat is an open sepulcher; the poison of asps is under their lips."

Mary's hand had found her husband's. "Let us go," he said in an undertone, and drew her to her feet. They passed to the door, the cynosure of observation, the launched utterance pursuing them:

"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, and the way of peace have they not known."

In the street Mary turned to him. "Don't mind, Bysshe," she pleaded.

He half smiled, but his eyes were feverishly bright. He kissed her as he answered:

"I'm going for a sail. Don't worry if I'm not back to-night. I'll run up to Via Reggia. The wind will do me good."

He crossed the pavement bareheaded and leaped into his sail-boat. A moment later, from the bridge, she saw through clouding tears the light craft careening down the Arno toward the sea.

The agitated ripple of the audience that followed their exit was not yet stilled when the discourse was strangely interrupted. From the pavement came the sound of running feet, a hoarse shout and a shot, ringing out sharply on the Sabbath stillness.

A second later a man dashed panting into the outer hall with a British marine at his heels.

CHAPTER LII

TREVANION IN THE TOILS

In sending Trevanion that day to the barracks on the Lung' Arno—whose door Cassidy had once seen him enter and in whose vicinity the naval surgeon, following this clue, had posted his squad of tars—luck had fallen oddly. The coursed hare has small choice of burrow. The Lanfranchi entrance was the quarry's only loophole and he took it.

As the hunted man sprang across the threshold he snatched the great iron key from the lock and swung it on the head of his pursuer. The marine dropped with a cut forehead, falling full in the doorway of the room where the service was in progress.

Instantly the gathering was in confusion. The sermon ceased, women screamed and their escorts poured into the hall to meet Cassidy, entering from the street, flushed and exultant, with a half-dozen more bluejackets.

His foremost pursuer fallen, Trevanion leaped like a stag for the stair. But half-way up he stopped at sight of a figure from whom he could hope no grace. Gordon had heard the signal-shot, armed himself and hastened to the stairway.

For once in his life Cassidy was oblivious of things religious. He had forgot the afternoon's service. He scarcely saw Dr. Nott's horror-lifted hands as his cassock fluttered between frightened worshipers to the door. His look did not travel to Gordon or beyond, where Teresa's agitated face watched palely. His round, peering eyes fastened with malignant triumph on the lowering figure midway of the marble ascent.

"Now, my fine ensign," he said with exultation, "what have you to say to a trip to the *Pylades?*"

Trevanion's dark face whitened. But his hand still gripped the key.

"I had enough of your cursed ship!" he flung in surly defiance, "and you'll not take me, either."

Cassidy laughed and turned to the seamen at his back. They stepped forward.

In Gordon's mind, in that moment of tension, crucial forces were weirdly contending. Over the heads of the group below, through the open door, he saw a ship's jolly-boat, pulling along the Arno bank. Leghorn—the *Pylades*—and years in a military fortress. That was what it meant for Trevanion. And what for him? The peace he coveted, a respite of persecution, for him and for Teresa—the right to live and work unmolested.

It was a lawless act—seizure unwarranted and on a foreign soil; an attempt daring but not courageous—they were ten against one. It was a deed of personal and private revenge on the part of Cassidy. And the man had taken refuge under his roof. For any other he would have interposed from a sheer sense of justice and hatred of hypocrisy. But for *him*—a poltroon, a skulker, and—his enemy?

What right had he to interfere? The manner was high-handed, but the penalty owed to British admiralty was just. It was not his affair. The hour he had sat in the moonlight near the Ravenna osteria, when his conscience had accepted this Nemesis, he had put away the temptation to harm him; though the other's weapon had struck, he had lifted no hand. He had left all to fate. And fate was arranging now. *He* had not summoned those marines!

But through these strident voices sounded a clearer one in his soul. It was not for that long-buried shame and cowardice in Greece—not for the attempt on his life at Bagnacavallo, nor for anything belonging to the present—that Trevanion stood now in this plight. It was ostensibly for an act antedating either, one he himself had known and mentally condoned years ago—a boy's desertion from a hateful routine. If he let him be taken now, was he not a party to Cassidy's revenge? Would he be any better than Cassidy? Would it be in him also any less than an ignoble and personal retaliation—what he had promised himself, come what might, he would not seek?

He strode down the stair, past Trevanion, and faced the advancing marines.

"Pardon me," he said. "This man is in my house. By what right do you pursue him?"

The blue-jackets stopped. A blotch of red sprang in Cassidy's straw-colored cheeks.

"He is a deserter from a king's ship. These marines are under orders. Hinder them at your peril!"

"This is Italy, not the high seas," rejoined Gordon

calmly. "British law does not reach here. You may say that to the captain of the *Pylades.*"

Cassidy turned furiously to his men. "Go on and take him!" he commanded.

Again they advanced, but they looked full into Gordon's pistol and the voice behind it said:

"That, under this roof, no man shall do! On my word as a peer of England!"

A few moments later, Cassidy, his face purpled with disappointment, had led his marines into the street, the agitated clergyman had gathered his flock again, and the hall was clear.

A postern gate opened from the Lanfranchi garden and to this Gordon led Trevanion without a word. The latter passed out with eyes that did not meet his deliverer's.

As Gordon climbed the stairway to where Teresa waited, shaken with the occurrence, the Rev. Dr. Nott was rounding the services so abruptly terminated with the shorter benediction:

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. *Amen.*"

CHAPTER LIII

THE COMING OF DALLAS

"Go on, Dallas," said Gordon.

He was standing in his study, its windows thrown open to the stifling air, the blinds drawn against the pitiless sun that beat hotly up from the sluggish Arno and loaded the world with fire. In the parched orange-trees in the garden cicalas shrilled and from the dusty street came the chant of a procession of *religiosi,* bearing relics and praying for rain.

The man who sat by the table wore the same kindly, scholarly face that Gordon had known of old, though his soft white hair was sparer at the temples. To make this journey he had spent the last of a check he had once received for six hundred pounds. His faith in Gordon had never wavered. Now, as he looked at the figure standing opposite, clad in white waistcoat and tartan hussar-braided jacket of the Gordon plaid, young and lithe, though with brown locks grayed, and with eyes brilliantly haunting and full of a purpose they had never before possessed, his own gaze misted with hope and wistfulness. He had had an especial object in this long journey to Italy.

"Hobhouse is still with his regiment," he proceeded.

"He'll be in Parliament before long. We dined together just a month ago to-night at White's Club. Lord Petersham is the leader of the dandies now. Brummell left England for debt."

In that hour's conversation Gordon had seen faded pictures fearfully distinct. He seemed to be standing again in his old lodgings in St. James Street—a red carnation in his buttonhole—facing Beau Brummell and Sheridan. He remembered how he had once let the old wit down in his cocked hat at Brookes'—as he had long ago been let down into his grave! He smiled painfully while he said with slowness:

"Three great men ruined in one year: Bonaparte, Brummell and I. A king, a cad, and a castaway!" His eyes were fixed on the empty fireplace as he spoke, but what they saw was very far away.

"How is Murray?" he asked presently.

"I visited him a fortnight before I left. He had just published the first part of 'Don Juan'."

Gordon winced. "Well?" he asked.

"He put only the printer's name on the title-page. The day it appeared he went to the country and shut himself up. He had not even dared open his letters."

"I can't blame him;"—Gordon's voice was metallic—"Moore wrote me the attorney-general would probably suppress it."

"I carried him the reviews," continued Dallas.

"I can guess their verdict!"

The other shook his head with an eager smile that brightened his whole countenance. "A few condemned, of course. Many hedged. But the *Edinburgh Review*—"

"Jeffrey. What did *he* say?"

The answer came with a vibrant emphasis: "That every word was touched with immortality!"

Gordon turned, surprised into wonder. His ancient detractor, whose early blow had struck from the flint in his soul that youthful flash, his dynamic Satire. The literary Nero whose nod had killed Keats. Was the old sneer become praise—now? Immortality!—not "damned to everlasting fame"? A glow of color came to his face.

The older man got up hastily and laid his hand affectionately on the other's shoulder. It seemed the moment to say what was on his mind. His voice shook:

"George, come back to England! Do not exile yourself longer. It is ready to forget its madness and to regret. Public feeling has changed! When Lady Caroline Lamb published 'Glenarvon,' her novel that made you out a man-monster, it did not sell an edition. She appeared at Lady Jersey's masquerade as Don Juan in the costume of a Mephistopheles, and the crowd even hissed. London is waiting for you, George! All it gave you once shall be yours again. You have only to come back!"

It was out at last, the purport of his journey.

Gordon felt his muscles grow rigid. The meaning of other things Dallas had told—gossip of society and the clubs—was become apparent. Could the tide have turned, then? Could it be that the time had come when his presence could reverse the popular verdict, cover old infamy and quench in renewed reputation the poisoned enmity that had poured desolation on his path? The fawning populace that had made of his

domestic life only a shredded remnant, hounded him to the wilds and entombed him in black infamy—did it think now to reëstablish the dishonored idol on its pedestal?

For an instant the undiked memory of all he had undergone swept over him in a stifling wave. The months of self-control faded. The new man that had been born in the forest of La Mira fell away. The old rage rose to clutch at his throat—the fiery, ruthless defiance that had lashed his enemies in Almack's Assembly Rooms. It drove the color from his face and lent flame to his eyes as he answered hoarsely:

"No! Never—never again! It is over forever. When I wrote then, it was not for the world's pleasure or pride. I wrote from the fullness of my mind, from passion, from impulse. And since I would not flatter their opinions, they drove me out—the shilling scribblers and scoundrels of priests, who do more harm than all the infidels who ever forgot their catechisms, and who, if the Christ they profess to worship reappeared, would again crucify Him! Since then I have fed the lamp burning in my brain with tears from my eyes and with blood from my heart. It shall burn on without them to the end!"

His old tutor's hand had dropped from his shoulder. Dallas was crestfallen and disconcerted. He turned away to the window and looked out sadly over the Arno, where a ship's launch floated by with band instruments playing.

For Gordon the rage passed as quickly as it had come. The stubborn demon that had gnashed at its fetters fell back. A feeling of shame suddenly possessed him.

"Scoundrels of priests!" He thought of Padre Somalian with a swift sense of contrition that his most reckless phraseology had never roused in the old days.

Standing there, regaining his temperate control, a sound familiar, yet long unheard, floated in from out of doors. It was a strain belonging to the past that had come so sharply home to him—the sound of the music on the launch in the river playing "God save the King."

It fell on Gordon's ear with a strange thrill. A tinge of softer warmth crept back slowly to his cheeks. For the first time in these years the hatred of his country that had darkled in the silt of ignominy vanished and a tenderer feeling took its place. It was the inalienable instinct of the Englishman, the birthright of English blood, transmitted to him through long lines of ancestry, from Norman barons who came with William the Conqueror, welling up now, strong and sweet and not to be denied. England! He had loved it once! In spite of a rebellious birth, an acid home, a harsh combative youth, he had loved it! How often he had heard that air—at Vauxhall—in the Mall—on the Thames! It brought back the smell of primroses, of blossoming yellow thorn and hazel-catkins quivering in the hedges. Some lost spring of recollection, automatically touched, showed him the balcony of his house on Piccadilly Terrace on the regent's birthday—below, the rattling of curbs and scabbards, the Hussar band playing that tune—he himself sitting with Annabel, and in her arms, Ada, his child! There were questions, unvoiced as yet, which he had longed but dreaded to ask. His hand strayed to his breast. There, always

worn, was a tress of baby's hair. What might his rehabilitation have meant to her, as she grew and took her place in the world?

He approached the window and touched the man who looked out.

"Dallas!" he said. "—Dallas!"

The other turned. His eyes were moist. He saw the alteration in Gordon's mood.

"George," he urged huskily, "do you not owe it to some one else?"

There *was* some one else—not the one Dallas meant—some one he had not seen! Gordon's gaze turned, too, to the river, flowing now like liquid lead with an oily scum under a smoky char that, while they talked, had been swiftly rising to paint out the quivering track of the sun. The launch was speeding for the opposite landing, the musicians covering their instruments. Even if all Dallas said were true! Go back—and leave Teresa? For Ada's sake, who would live to bear his name, to return to an empty reinstatement, and stifle with the pulpy ashes of dead fires this love that warmed his new life! For Ada's sake—go back, and leave Teresa?

The visitor spoke again. When he had asked that question, a child not a woman had been in his thought. He had not told all he had come to say.

"I have been to Seaham, George; I went to Lady Noël's funeral."

His hearer started. "You saw Ada?" he asked, his features whitening. "You saw her?" He clutched Dallas' wrist. "She is six years old. Did she speak my name, Dallas? What do they teach her of me?"

The other's tone was almost as strained; the story he had to tell was a hard one.

"Your portrait, the large one painted the year you were married, hung above the mantelpiece. It was covered with a heavy curtain. Lady Noël's will forbade that the child should see it before her twentieth year. Laddie, *Ada has never heard your name!*"

Dallas stopped abruptly at the look on Gordon's face. No anger showed there, only the dull gray of mortal hurt. A curious moaning sound had arisen, forerunner of the sultry tempest that had been gathering, rapid as anger. The cicalas had ceased shrilling from the garden. A peculiar warm dampness was in the air and a drop of rain splashed on the marble sill.

"Do you wonder," Dallas continued after a pause, "that I want you to go back?"

Gordon made no reply. His eyes were focused on a purple stain of storm mounting to the zenith, like some caryatid upholding a caldron of steam, all ink and cloud color, while before it slaty masses of vapor fled like monstrous behemoths, quirted into some gigantic sky-inclosure.

Dallas pulled the window shut.

With the action, unheralded as doom, a great violet sword of lightning wrote the autograph of God across the sky, and a shock of thunder, instantaneous and crashing like near ordnance, shook the walls of the palace. It loosed the vicious pandemonium of the tropic air into tornado, sudden and appalling.

While the echoes of that detonation still reverberated, into the room, as though hurled from the wing of the

unleashed wind, came Mary Shelley, drenched with the rain, bareheaded, gasping.

"Shelley's boat has not returned!" she wailed. "He is at sea in the storm. Oh, I am afraid—afraid—afraid!"

Teresa entered at the moment with a frightened face, loose-haired and pale, and Mary ran to her, sobbing.

Gordon had turned from the window, but his countenance was void and expressionless. "Shelley?" he repeated vacantly, and sat down heavily in the nearest chair.

Teresa suddenly put the arms of the weeping girl aside and ran to him.

"Gordon!" she cried, as Dallas hurried forward in alarm. "Gordon, what is it?"

"England—Teresa—" he said. Then his head fell forward against her breast.

For twelve hours, while the wild, typhoon-like storm raved and shrieked over Pisa, Gordon lay seemingly in a deep sleep. He did not wake till the next dawn was breaking, wetly bright and cool. When he woke, it was to healthful life, without recollection of pain or vision.

And yet in those hours intervening, strange things happened hundreds of leagues away in England.

Has genius, that epilepsy of the soul, a shackled self, which under rare stress can leave the flesh for a pilgrimage whose memory is afterward hidden in that clouded abyss that lies between its waking and its dreaming? Did some subtle telepathy exist between his soul in Italy and the soul that he had transmitted to his child? Who can tell?

But that same afternoon, while one George Gordon lay moveless in the Lanfranchi library, another George Gordon wrote his name in the visitor's book at the king's palace, in Hyde Park, London. Lady Caroline Lamb, from her carriage seat, saw him entering Palace Yard and took the news to Melbourne House. The next morning's papers were full of his return.

That night, too, she who had once been Annabel Milbanke woke unaccountably in her room at Seaham, in the county of Durham, to find the trundle-bed in which her little daughter Ada slept, empty.

She roused a servant and searched. In the drawing-room a late candle burned, and here, in her night-gown, the wee wanderer was found, tearless, wide-awake and unafraid, gazing steadfastly above the mantelpiece.

The mother looked and cried out. The curtain had fallen from its fastenings, and the child was looking at her father's portrait.

CHAPTER LIV

THE PYRE

Over the hillocks, under the robed boughs of the Pisan forest, went a barouche, drawn by four post-horses ready to drop from the intensity of the noonday sun. In it were Gordon and Dallas. They had been strangely silent during this ride. From time to time Dallas wiped his forehead and murmured of the heat. Gordon answered in monosyllables.

They had reached a lonely stretch of beach-wilderness, broken by tufts of underwood, gnawed by tempests and stunted by the barren soil. Before it curved the blue windless Mediterranean, cradling the Isle of Elba. Behind, the view was bounded by the Italian Alps, volcanic crags of white marble, white and sulphury like a frozen hurricane. Across the sandy extent, at equal distances, rose high, square battlemented towers, guarding the coast from smugglers.

Gordon's gaze, though it was fixed on the spot they were approaching, saw only a woman's desolated form clasped in Teresa's sympathizing arms.

At a spot marked by the withered trunk of a fir-tree, near a ramshackle hut covered with reeds—a flimsy shelter for night patrols—the vehicle stopped and Gor-

don descended. A little way off was pitched a tent, by which stood a group of mounted dragoons and Italian laborers, the latter with mattocks in their hands. A single figure came from the group and greeted him.

It was Trevanion. Gordon had not seen him since the hour of that Sabbath service from which Shelley had fled—to the fatal storm whose wrecks strewed the sand where they now stood. Since Mary Shelley had rushed into the Lanfranchi Palace with that cry of terror and foreboding, days had passed: days of sick search, hurrying couriers, wild speculation and fearful hope. All this had ended with the message from Trevanion which had sent the laborers and brought the barouche to-day to the lonely spot where the sea had given up its dead.

The man who had sent this message was unkempt and unshaven, his swarthy face clay-pale, his black eyes bloodshot. He had searched the coast day and night, sleepless and savage. There had been desperation in his toil. In his semi-barbaric blood had raged a curious conflict between his hatred of Gordon and something roused by the other's act in delivering him from Cassidy's marines. He was by instinct an Oriental, and instinct led him to revenge; but his strain of Welsh blood made his enemy's magnanimity unforgettable and had driven him to this fierce effort for an impersonal requital. Because Shelley had been the friend of the man he hated but who had aided him, the deed in some measure satisfied the crude remorse that fought with his vulpine enmity.

Almost touching the creeping lip of surf, three wands stood upright in the sand. Trevanion beckoned the

laborers and they began to dig in silence. At length a hollow sound followed the thrust of a mattock.

Gordon drew nearer. He heard leadenly the muttered conversation of the workmen as they waited, leaning on their spades—saw but dimly the uniforms of the dragoons. He scarcely felt the hot sand scorching his feet.

Was the object they had unearthed that whimsical youth whom he had seen first in the Fleet Prison? The unvarying friend who had searched him out at San Lazzarro—true-hearted, saddened but not resentful for the world's contumely, his gaze unwavering from that empyrean in which swam his lustrous ideals? This battered flotsam of the tempest—could this be Shelley?

From the pocket of the faded blue jacket a book protruded. He stooped and drew it out. It was the "Œdipus" of Sophocles, doubled open.

> "Aidoneus! Aidoneus, I implore
> Grant thou the stranger wend his way
> To that dim land that houses all the dead,
> With no long agony or voice of woe.
> For so, though many evils undeserved
> Upon his life have fallen,
> God, the All-Just, shall raise him up again!"

He lifted his eyes from the page as Trevanion spoke his name. He followed him to the tent. Beside it the laborers had heaped a great mass of driftwood and fagots gathered from a stunted pine-growth.

Shuffling footsteps fell behind him—he knew they were bearing the body. He averted his eyes, smelling the pungent, aromatic odors of the frankincense, wine and salt that were poured over all.

Trevanion came from the tent with a torch and put it into his hands. Gordon's fingers shook as he held it to the fagots, but he did the work thoroughly, lighting all four corners. Then he flung the torch into the sea, climbed the slope of a dune and sat down, feeling for an instant a giddiness, half of the sun's heat and half of pure horror.

The flames had leaped up over the whole pyre, glistening with wavy yellow and deep indigo, as though giving to the atmosphere the glassy essence of vitality itself. Save for their rustle and the shrill scream of a solitary curlew, wheeling in narrow fearless circles about the fiery altar, there was no sound.

Sitting apart on the yellow sand, his eyes on the flame quivering upward like an offering of orisons and aspirations, tremulous and radiant, the refrain of Ariel came to Gordon:

> "Of his bones are coral made;
> Those are pearls, that were his eyes:
> Nothing of him that doth fade,
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange."

Had Shelley been right? Was death, for Christian or pagan, only a part of the inwoven design, glad or sad, on that veil which hides from us some high reality? Was Dallas—was Padre Somalian—nearer right than his own questioning that had ended in negation? Had Sheridan found the girl wife he longed for—beyond the questioning and the stars? And was that serene soul, whose body now sifted to its primal elements, walking free somewhere in a universe of loving intelli-

gence which to him, George Gordon, had been at most only "The Great Mechanism"?

At length he rose. The group in the lee of the tent had approached the pyre. He heard wondering exclamations. Going nearer, he saw that of Shelley's body there remained only a heap of white ashes—and the heart. This the flames had refused to touch.

He felt a strange sensation dart through every nerve. Trevanion thrust in his hand and took it from the embers.

Gordon turned to the barouche, where Dallas leaned back watching, pale and grave. He had brought an oaken box from Pisa, and returning with this to the beach, he gathered in it the wine-soaked ashes and laid the heart upon them. His pulses were thrilling and leaping to a wild man-hysteria.

As he replaced the coffer in the carriage he saw Trevanion wading knee-deep in the cool surf. He settled the box between his knees and the horses toiled laboriously toward the homeward road.

A sound presently rose behind them. It was Trevanion, shouting at the curlew circling above his head —a wild, savage scream of laughter.

Gordon clenched his hands on the edge of the seat and a great tearless sob broke from his breast. It was the release of the tense bow-string—the scattering of all the bottled grief and horror that possessed him.

He became aware after a time that Dallas was reading aloud. The latter had picked up the blistered copy of the "Œdipus" and was translating.

As he listened to the flowing lines, a mystical change was wrought in George Gordon. With a singular ac-

curacy of estimation, his mind set the restless cravings of his own past over against Shelley's placid temperament—his long battle beside the other's acquiescence. He had been the simoon, Shelley the trade-wind. He had razed, Shelley had reconstructed. His own doubts had pointed him—where? Shelley had been meditating on immortality when he met the end.

The end? Or was it only the beginning? "God, the All-Just, shall raise him up again!"—the phrase was running in his mind as they reëntered the palace that afternoon.

Fletcher handed him a card in the library.

"The gentleman came with Prince Mavrocordato," he said. "They wished me to say to your lordship they would return this evening."

The card read:

LIEUTENANT EDWARD BLAQUIERE

The Greek
Revolutionary Committee LONDON

CHAPTER LV

THE CALL

In the Lanfranchi library with Gordon four men were seated in attitudes of interest and attention. Dallas' chair was pushed far back in the shadow and his hand shaded his eyes from the early candles. Opposite was Count Pietro Gamba, his alert profile and blond beard looking younger than ever beside the darker Asiatic comeliness of Mavrocordato. At the table, a map spread before him, his clean-cut, wiry features full in the light, sat the stranger who had left the card —Lieutenant Blaquiere, of London, spokesman of the Greek Revolutionary committee. The latter went on now, with a certain constrained eagerness, his hand thrown out across the mahogany:

"The standard was raised when Hypsilantes invaded Wallachia and declared Greece free. The defeat of his ten thousand means little. The *spirit* of the nation is what counts, and that, my lord, through all the years of Turkish dominion, has never died."

For an hour the visitor had talked, sketching graphically and succinctly the plans and hopes of the revolutionists in Greece, the temporary organization effected, the other juntas forming, under the English commit-

tee's leadership, in Germany and Switzerland. He was deliberate and impressive. Pietro, enthusiastic for the cause of his patron, Mavrocordato, had been voluble with questions. Even Dallas had asked not a few. Gordon, the host, had been of them all most silent.

He had felt an old vision of his youth grow instinct again. Blaquiere's words seemed now not to be spoken within four walls, but to ring out of the distance of an uncouth shore, with strange stern mountains rising near, a kettle simmering on a fire of sticks, and calm stars looking down on a minaretted town.

> "The mountains look on Marathon—
> And Marathon looks on the sea;
> And musing there an hour alone,
> I dreamed that Greece might still be free!"

The verse hummed in his mind. Was it years ago he had written that? Or only yesterday? A *dream*—that had been all! It had faded with his other visions, one day when he had waked to fame, when he had bartered them for the bubble of celebrity, the flitter-gold of admiration! In those old days, he thought with bitterness, he would have been an eager spirit in the English movement. Then he had sat in Parliament; now he was an expatriate adventurer, a disqualified *attaché* of the kingless Court of Letters!

One thing he still could do. Revolution needed munitions, parks of artillery, hospital stores. Money could furnish these—it was the sinews of war. If such were the object of Blaquiere's visit, he should not be disappointed. He possessed, unentailed, Newstead Abbey, the seat of his ancestors, to whose memory he had clung

fondly through all his ostracism—and there were his coal lands of Rochdale. The latter could be realized on without difficulty. His sister had a private fortune of her own. Ada, his child, had been provided for at her birth. Rochdale should bring close upon thirty thousand pounds.

He spoke to Blaquiere:

"Lieutenant, Greece had my earliest songs. She shall have what she can use to far better advantage now. Mr. Dallas, who starts for London to-morrow, will take back my authority for the sale of certain properties whose proceeds shall be turned over to your committee there."

Mavrocordato's face flushed with feeling. He turned his eyes on Blaquiere. A glance of understanding passed between them, and the latter rose.

"Your lordship," he said, "the thanks of our committee are small return for such a gift. The gratitude of Greece will be an ampler recompense. But—I am here to ask yet more than this."

As Gordon gazed inquiringly, he laid two documents before him on the table:

"Will your lordship read?"

Gordon took up the first. A tremor leaped to his lips. He saw his own credentials, signed by the full committee in London, as their representative—*in Greece*. His eye caught the well-known, cramped chirography of John Hobhouse among the signatures.

For a moment his heart seemed to stop. He looked at the second, glancing at the names affixed: "Alexander Hypsilantes"—"Marco Botzaris"—a dozen Greek

primates and leaders. The name of one man there present had been added—Mavrocordato.

As he read, the room was very still. The deep breathing of the men who waited seemed to fill it. He heard Blaquiere's voice piercing through:

"The revolution needs now only a supreme leader. Your lordship is known and loved by the Greek people as is no other. The petty chieftains, whose inveterate ambitions now embroil a national cause, for such a rallying-point would lay aside their quarrels. With your great name foreign loans would be certain. Such is the unanimous opinion of the committee in London, my lord."

Dallas' snuff-box dropped to the floor. Gamba made a sudden movement, but Mavrocordato's hand, laid on his knee, stilled him.

A flush, vivid on its paleness, had come to Gordon's cheek—an odd sensation of confusion that overspread the instant's elation. If the Greek people loved him, it was for what he had written years ago, not for what he was now, a discredited wanderer among the nations! With what real motive did the committee in London place this great cause in his hand? Did they offer it in sincere belief, as to one whom England had misjudged and to whom she owed restitution—a lover of liberty, one capable of a true deed, of judgment, discernment and high results? A tingling pang went through him. No. But to one whose name was famed —how famed!—whose attachment to the revolution would draw to the struggle the eyes of the world,—*to assure foreign loans!*

He rose and walked to the window, his throat tighten-

ing. No one spoke, though young Gamba stirred restlessly. Dallas was peering into his recovered snuff-box, and Blaquiere sat movelessly watching.

As Gordon looked out into the dimming dusk and the sky's blue garden blossoming with pale stars, the new self that had been developing in conscience gained its ascendancy. What should it matter to him, why or how the opportunity came? To Hobhouse, at least, it had been an act of faith and friendship. As a body, the committee had considered only its object, political advantage to England—the success of the Greek revolutionary arms. Why should he ache so fiercely for that juster valuation which would never be given? Was it not enough that the cause was one which had been the brightest dream of his youth; that sober opinion deemed his effort able to advance it?

His mind overran the past years. He saw himself putting away the old savage indifference and insolent disdain, and struggling for a fresh foothold on life. The malice that had pursued him in Trevanion he had accepted unresistingly, as part of an ordained necessity. But with the unfolding of the new conception and character he had come to realize that, as the most intimate elements of his own destruction had lain within himself, so only to himself could he look for self-retrieval.

And was that retrieval to be found in the fatuous passiveness behind which he had intrenched himself? If there were an appointed destiny, it could not lie that way, but rather in the meeting of the issues fate offered, the doing of a worthy deed for the deed's own sake, the making real of an heroic dream—putting aside

the paltry pride that cavilled how or why that issue was presented—without reckoning save of the final outcome.

He thought of an oaken box now on its way to a cemetery in Rome. What would the man whose ashes it held have replied? He needed no answer to that!

As he pondered, from the shadowy garden, under the orange trees woven with the warm scents of summer, rose a soft strain. It was Teresa, singing to her harp, her voice burdened to-night with the grief of Mary Shelley—the song Gordon had long ago written to a plaintive Hindoo refrain.

Low as the words were, they came clearly into the silence:

> "Oh!—my lonely—lonely—lonely—Pillow!
> Where is my lover? Where is my lover?
> Is it his bark which my dreary dreams discover?
> Far—far away! and alone along the billow?
>
> Oh! my lonely—lonely—lonely—Pillow!
> Why must my head ache where his gentle brow lay?
> How the long night flags lovelessly and slowly,
> And my head droops over thee like the willow!"

Gordon's gaze had turned in the direction of the sound. He could see her sitting in her favorite spot, her hair a dusk of starlight, leaning to her harp. If she only had not sung that—now!

"I do not ask a hasty answer,"—Blaquiere was speaking again,—"it is not a light proposal. Your lordship will wish time—"

The man to whom he spoke put out his hand with a sudden gesture. "Wait," he said.

What need of time? Would a day, a week, make him

more able? Through the turmoil of new emotions he reasoned swiftly.

There were two to consider: the woman he loved, whose singing voice he heard, and Ada, his child. If for Teresa's happiness he put aside this call, what then? A continuance of life in this fond refuge he had found here in Italy—in time, peace and quiet, perhaps. But a happiness cankered for them both by the recollection of what he might have done, but would not. And for Ada? The knowledge that he had once failed a supreme cause.

The song rose again. Pietro Gamba's face turned suddenly tender.

> "Oh! thou, my sad and solitary Pillow!
> Send me kind dreams to keep my heart from breaking,
> In return for the tears I shed upon thee waking;
> Let me not die till he comes back o'er the billow!"

If he went—and did not return.

To die worthily, for a great cause—though he be but one of the many waves that break upon the shore before the tide can reach its mark. To forward the splendid march of freedom against the barbarian. To lead Greece toward its promised land, even though he himself be, like Moses, destined to see it but afar off. The world could sneer or praise, as it chose. It might attribute to him the highest motives or the most vainglorious. Some time it would understand. It would have his Memoirs, his final bequest to Ada.

He thought of a picture in England, hidden behind a curtain lest his daughter should grow up to know the features of her father. "By their deeds ye shall know

them"—the saying possessed him. Far kinder his going for her memory of him!

Better for Teresa. Her brother remained to care for her. She had in her own right only the dowry returned to her from the Guiccioli coffers with her papal separation. But by selling Newstead Abbey—Dallas could arrange that—he could put her beyond the reach of want forever. Better far for her! In her recollection it would cover the stain of that life in Venice from which her hand had drawn him, and leave her love a higher, nobler thing.

He lifted his head suddenly and addressed Blaquiere: "I will go," he said.

CHAPTER LVI

THE FAREWELL

In the garden the roses were as fragrant, the orange trees as spicy-sweet as ever, every sound and scent as in so many evenings past. Yet Teresa's eyes were heavy, her heart like lead within her breast.

Since the hour she had sung to her harp—it lay beside her now—when Gordon had found her there and told her the outcome of that library conference in which she had had no part, it seemed as though dreary decades had passed. She had lain in his arms at first breathless, stricken with a weight of voiceless grief, while he spoke, hopefully, calmly, of the cause and his determination. The great cry into which her agony bled at length had gripped his soul. She had felt his heart leap and quiver against her, shaken with her sobs, and knew he suffered with her in every pang. It was a realization of this that had finally given her self-control and a kind of calmness.

In the time that followed: weeks of preparation, correspondence with the Revolutionary Committees and with Mavrocordato, who had preceded Gordon to Greece, selection of stores, the chartering and freighting of the brig *Hercules* at Genoa—all the minutiæ that visual-

ized the departure that must come—the two sides of her love had struggled together.

Sometimes the smaller, the less unselfish personal passion, gained temporary mastery. What was she to him if she were not more than everything else? What was Greece to her? Once he had said that all he should ever write would spring from her love. Was that love fit only to inspire poems upon paper? Now he left her and forsook that love to go to a useless danger—and she had given him all! The thought sobbed in her. She was a woman, and she struggled with a woman's anguish.

Then her greater soul would conquer. She would remember that night on the square in Venice, the glimpse of his tortured self-amendment at San Lazzarro, and the calmer strength she had felt growing in him from the day their lips met on the convent hill. Her instinct told her this determination of his was only a further step in that soul-growth whose first strivings she had herself awakened. This gave her a melancholy comfort that was sometimes almost joy. In his face of late she had distinguished something subtle and significant, that carried her back to the night she had left his book at the feet of Our Lady of Sorrows. It was the veiled look she had then imagined the object of her petition, the fallen angel sorrowing for his lost estate, would wear—the patience and martyrdom of renunciation.

These struggles of hers had been the ultimate revealment, as the hour she had held Gordon's bleeding body in her arms had been life's primal comprehension. That had shown her love's heights and depths; this

taught her all its breadth, its capacity for self-abnegation, its wild, unselfish yearning for the best good of the thing beloved.

As she and Fletcher prepared the bare necessities he was to take with him, his buried London life had risen before her. The woman who should have loved him most—his wife—had sent him into a cruel ostracism, hating and despising him. She whom the law's decree forbade that he should love, was sending him away, too, but to a noble cause and with a breaking heart. She had made his present better than his past. Should not his future be even more to her than the present?

All had at last been put in readiness. Waiting the conversion of his English properties, Gordon had utilized all his Italian funds. Ammunition, horses from his own stable, field-guns and medicines for a year's campaign had been loaded under his tireless supervision. Lastly, he had taken aboard with his own hands ten thousand crowns in specie and forty thousand in bills of exchange. Four days before, with himself and Fletcher aboard, the brig had sailed from Genoa, whence swift couriers had daily brought Teresa news, for he had small time for pen work. To-day the vessel had cast anchor at Leghorn, her final stop, only a few hours away. To-night, since she put to sea with the dawn-tide, Gordon was to come for a last farewell.

As Teresa sat waiting in the garden, she tried not to think of the to-morrow, the empty, innumerable to-morrows. It was already quite dark, for there was no moon; she was thankful for this, for he could not so readily see her pallor. He should carry away a re-

collection of hope and cheerfulness, not of agony or tears. With a memory of what she had been singing the night of Blaquiere's coming, she lifted her harp and began softly and bravely, her fingers finding their way on the strings by touch:

> "Then if thou wilt—no more my lonely Pillow,
> In one embrace let these arms again enfold him,
> And then expire of the joy—but to behold him!
> Oh! my lone bosom!—oh!—my lonely Pillow!"

The effort was too great. The harp rebounded against the ground. She bowed her head on the arm of the bench and burst into sobbing.

The twang of the fallen harp called loudly to one whose hand was on the postern gate while he listened. He came swiftly through the dark.

She felt his arms close about her, her face, torn with crying, pressed against his breast. So he held her till the vehemence of her weeping stilled, and her emotion appeared only in long convulsive breaths, like a child's after a paroxysm of grief.

When Gordon spoke, it was to tell of sanguine news from the English Committee, of the application of French and German officers to serve under him, cheerful detail that calmed her.

A long pause ensued. "What are you thinking?" he asked at length.

She answered, her eyes closed, a mere murmur in his ear: "Of the evening you came to the garden at Ravenna."

"It was moonlight," he replied.

"You kissed a curl of my hair," she whispered. "I slept with it across my lips that night."

He bent and kissed her eyelids, her mouth, her fragile fingers. "My love!" he exclaimed.

"I wanted to be strong to-night," she said piteously.

"You *are* strong and brave, too! Do I not know how you brought me to the casa—how you drank the mandragora?"

She shivered. "Oh, if it were nothing but a potion to-night—to drink, and to wake in your arms! Now I shall wake alone, and you—"

"I shall be always with you," he answered. "By day, on the sea or in the camp. At night I shall wander with you among the stars."

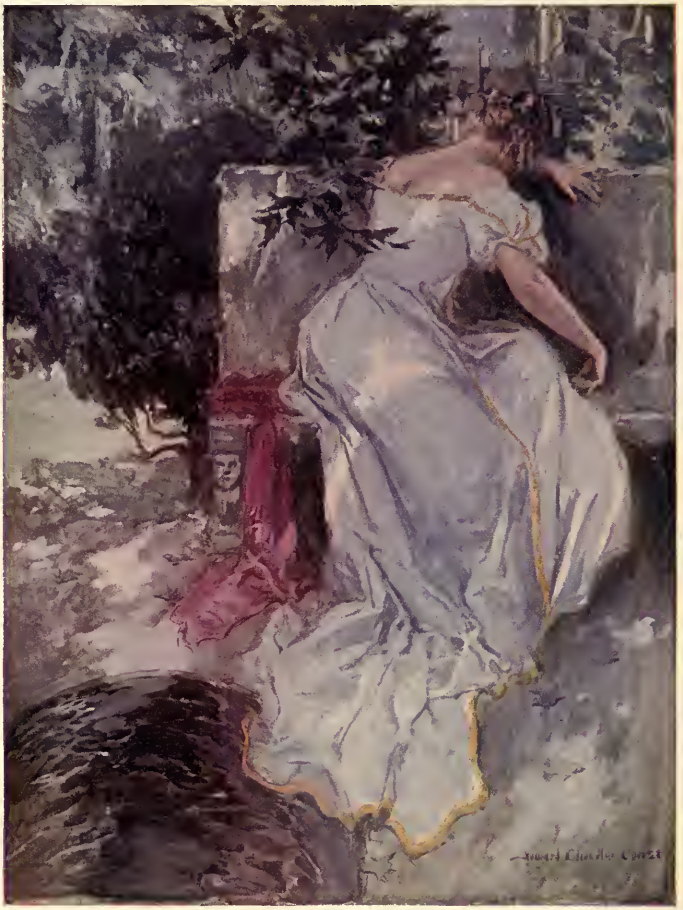
"I shall ask the Virgin to watch over you. Every hour I shall pray to God to have you in His keeping, and to guard you from danger."

His arms tightened. He seemed to hear a chanted litany climbing a marble staircase:

"From lightning and tempest; from plague, pestilence, and famine; from battle and murder, and from sudden death;

"*Good Lord, deliver us.*"

Had he ever prayed? Not to the God of the orthodox Cassidy, of the stern ecclesiastics who had inveighed against him. Not to the beneficent Father that Dallas and Padre Somalian believed in. Never in his life had he voiced a petition to a higher power. All he had known was that agnostic casuistry of his youth, "The Unknown God"—that fatalistic impersonality of



SHE BOWED HER HEAD ON THE ARM OF THE BENCH. *p. 380.*

his later career, "The Great Mechanism." He thought of lines Teresa's hand had penned, that since a gray dawn when he read and re-read them to the chuckling of a fiend within him had never left his breast. They had opened a spiritual chasm that was ever widening between the old and the new.

"Dearest," he said, "I would not exchange a prayer of yours for all else life could give. You prayed for me before you ever saw me, when others gave me bitterness and revilings."

"You never deserved that!"

"You forgave because you loved," he answered gently. "Your love has been around me ever since. I was unworthy of it then—I am unworthy now."

"England never knew you," she protested, "as I know you. Your soul is good! Whatever your acts, I know it has always been so!"

He sighed. "My soul was full of glorious dreams, once—this dream of Greece's freedom was its dearest. But they were tainted with regnant passion and foolish pride and ingrain recklessness. When the world flattered me, I threw away all that could have helped me rise. I sold my birthright for its mess of pottage. When it turned, I scoffed and hated it and plunged further away from all that was worthy. Men do more harm to themselves than ever the devil could do them. I sunk my soul deeper and deeper in the mire—because I did not care, because I had nothing and no one to care for—till you found me, Teresa, that day in the wood at La Mira! You pointed me to myself, to all I might and should have been. You taught me first remorse, then the idle indolence of regret; now, at last, the wish to do,

to be! Neither success nor failure, praise nor scorn, could do this. If there is anything good in me now, it is because of that, Teresa! If the future ever forgets to know me as wicked and wastrel, and remembers better things I have done or tried to do—"

"You are the noblest man in the world!"

A quick spasm crossed his face in the darkness. Noble! Yet how little popular esteem seemed to him at that moment! He went on hurriedly, for what he had to say must be in few words:

"Always—whatever happens—you will remember what I have said, Teresa?"

Whatever happens! She threw her arms about his neck, mute with the anguish that was fighting with her resolution.

"—that you are all to me. That I love you—you only; that I shall love you to the end."

"If I forgot that, I could not live!" she said chokingly.

The great clock struck ponderously from the palace hall—a clamorous reminder that he must hasten, for the night was almost without a star, and a wreathing nebulous mist forbade rapid riding. Through all his preparations this hour had reared as the last harbor-light of home. It had come and gone like a breath on glass. In the still night the chime sounded like a far spired bell. Some banal freak of memory brought to Gordon's mind the old church dial jutting over Fleet Street in London, and the wooden wild men which had struck the hour with their clubs as he issued from John Murray's shop the night of his maiden speech in Parliament.

The strokes counted twelve—midnight. She shuddered as he rose to his feet.

"My love—my life!" he said, and clasped her close.

"God keep you!" she breathed.

He left her and went a few steps into the darkness. She thought him gone. But he came back swiftly, his hands groping.

He heard a shuddering sob tear its way from her heart, but she stood motionless in his arms, her cheek grown suddenly cold against his own.

In that moment a strange feeling had come to her that they clasped each other now for the last time. It was as though an icy hand were pressed upon her heart, stilling its pulsations.

She felt his arms again release her and knew she was alone.

It lacked an hour of day when Gordon rode into Leghorn, and the first streak of dawn strove vainly to shred the curdled mist as he stepped from a lighter aboard the *Hercules*. The tide was at full and a rising breeze flapped the canvas.

Standing apart on her deck, his mind abstracted, though his ears were humming with the profane noises of creaking cordage, windlass and capstan, he felt as if the fall of the headsman's ax had divided his soul in two. He saw his past rolled up like a useless palimpsest in the giant hand of destiny—his future an unvexed scroll laid waiting for mystic characters yet unformed and unimagined. Beneath the bitterness of parting, he felt, strangely enough, a kind of peace wider than he had

ever known. The hatred that tracked, the Nemesis that had harassed, he left behind him.

Absorbed in his reflections, he did not hear the bawled orders of the ship's mate, nor the spitting crackle of musketry from some ship's hulk near by in the foggy smother. The brig was lifting and pushing as she gained headway. The captain spoke at his elbow.

"Begging your lordship's pardon, a man has just come aboard by the ship's bow-chains. He had a tough swim for it and a bullet through the forearm. Says he was shanghaied by the *Pylades*. If we put about, we'll lose the tide. What are your lordship's orders?"

"Is he Italian?"

"No, sir. He says he's an Englishman, but he looks Lascar."

"His name?" the demand fell sharply.

"Trevanion, your lordship."

As Gordon stood there, breathing deeply, Teresa, at home in her room, stretched at the foot of the crucifix, was crying in a voice of anguish, that icy hand still pressed upon her heart: "O God! help me to remember that it is for Greece! and for himself most of all! Help me not to forget—not to forget!"

For only an instant Gordon hesitated. "Let him stay," he said then to the captain, and turned away to his cabin.

CHAPTER LVII

THE MAN IN THE RED UNIFORM

From a vessel lying beyond the shallows that stretched three miles from the Greek shore, a puff of smoke broke balloon-like, to be followed, a moment after, by a muffled report.

The crowds of people clustered along the town's front cheered wildly. Every day for weeks they had been watching: blue-eyed, dusky Albanians, with horse-hair *capotes* and pistoled girdles; supple lighter complexioned Greeks in the national kirtle; Suliotes, whose mountain wildnesses were reflected in their dress; and a miscellaneous mixture of citizens of every rank and age.

For this vessel bore the coming savior of the Grecian nation, the great English peer whose songs for years had been sung in their own Romaic tongue, whose coming had been prated of so long by their primates—he who should make them victorious against the Turk. Was it not he who, in Cephalonia, on his way hither, had fed from his own purse the flying refugees from Scio and Patras, and sent them back with arms in their hands? Was he not the friend of their own Prince Mavrocordato, who in this same stronghold of Missolonghi had fought off Omer Pasha with his twenty thousand troops, and now controlled the provisional government of Western Greece? Was it not he who had sent two hundred thousand piastres to outfit the fleet

before whose approach Yussuff Pasha's squadron had withdrawn sullenly to Lepanto?

They had known of Gordon's departure from Cephalonia from the forty Mariotes he sent ahead to be his own body-guard, and who strutted it about the fortifications, boasting of the distinction. His consort vessel had arrived, after narrowly escaping capture. His own brig, chased by the Turks, had been driven on the rocky coast. This they had learned from a surly Arab-like Englishman, his arm in a sling from an unhealed bullet-wound, who had been in the vessel and had found a footsore way overland.

The metropolitan had called a special service in the church for his lordship's deliverance. Now his ship, escaping rocks and the enemy, had anchored safely in the night, and the roar of salutes from the Speziot brigs-of-war that lay in the harbor had waked the sleeping port. Since daylight the shore had been a moving mass, sprinkled with brilliant figures: soldiery of fortune, wearing the uniform of well-nigh every European nation.

There was one who watched that pushing, staring multitude who did not rejoice. As he listened to the tumult of gladness, Trevanion's heart was a fiery furnace. His hatred, fostered so long, was the "be-all and end-all" of his moody existence, and the benefit Gordon had conferred when he delivered him from Cassidy's marines, had become at length insupportable. With a perversion of reasoning characteristically Asiatic, he had chosen to wipe it from the slate and make the favor naught. He went to Leghorn and to the amaze of Cassidy, surrendered himself to the *Pylades*.

This voluntary act, perhaps, made vigilance lighter. He watched his chance, leaped overboard in the foggy morning, and would have got safe to shore but for one well-aimed musket. Chance put the departing brig in his way. He had been delirious in the forecastle for days from his wound, and knowledge of Gordon's presence and mission had not come to him till the Grecian shore was in sight.

In his durance on the *Pylades* his hair and beard had grown; he fancied himself unrecognized. Hour by hour, watching Gordon covertly, seeing him living and sleeping on deck in all weathers, eating the coarse fare and enduring every privation of his sailors, Trevanion's blood inflamed itself still more. He owed the other nothing now! He raged within himself at the celebrity the expedition and its leader acquired at Cephalonia. In the pursuit of Gordon's vessel by the Turks he had hoped for its capture. When she ran upon the rocks he deemed this certain, and forsook her jubilantly. He had no fear of making his way afoot to Missolonghi; strangely enough, years before, during the Feast of Ramazan, he had fled over this same path to escape a Mohammedan vengeance, and pursued by the memory of a Greek girl abandoned to the last dreadful penalty because of him—a memory that haunted him still.

To-day, as Trevanion saw the vessel that held his enemy, his eyes gleamed with a sinister regard.

"Bah!" sneered a voice behind him in the Romaic tongue. "An English noble! Who says so? Mavrocordato. There are those who say he is a Turk in disguise who will sell the country to the sultan."

The man who had spoken wore the dress of a chieftain of lower rank. His comrade answered with an oath:

"Or to the English. *Kalon malubdi!* Give me a chief like Ulysses! In six months he would have gained the whole Peloponnesus, but for the coming of this foreigner—may a good ball find him!"

To Trevanion the malediction was as grateful as a draft of cool beer to the scorched palate of a waking sot. He spoke in the vernacular: "There are English, too, who would drink that toast! Who is Ulysses?"

His faded sailor's rig had been misleading. Both clapped hands to their belts as, "One who will sweep this puppet of Mavrocordato's into the gulf!" the first replied fiercely.

"May I be there to help!" exclaimed Trevanion, savagely. "Take me to this leader of yours!"

The two Suliotes looked at him narrowly, then conferred. At length the chief came closer.

"If you would serve Ulysses," he said, "meet me beyond the north fortifications at sunset."

Trevanion nodded, and they turned away, as a shout went up from the assembled people. A boat had swung out from the brig's davits. It carried a flag—a white cross on a blue ground—the standard of New Greece.

The man with the disabled arm flushed suddenly, for his dark, sullen gaze had fallen on the sea-wall, where stood His Highness, Prince Mavrocordato, with Pietro Gamba. The latter had followed Gordon to Cephalonia and from there had come on the *Hercules'* consort. A slinking shame bit Trevanion as he recalled the day when his poisoned whisper would have fired that young

heart to murder; he wheeled and plunged into the human surge.

The couple on the sea-wall watched eagerly. The lowered boat had been rapidly manned. A figure wearing a scarlet uniform took its place in the stern-sheets. The crowd buzzed and dilated.

The prince lowered his field-glass. "Thank God, he is safe!" he exclaimed in earnest Italian. "We have been in desperate straits, Pietro. With the General Assembly preparing to meet, when all the western country is in such disorder, with these untamed mountain chiefs flocking here with their clans, with Botzaris killed in battle, and only my paltry five thousand to keep dissensions in check, I have been prepared for the worst. Now there is hope. Look!"

He stretched his hand toward the teeming quay. "They have waited for him as for the Messiah. All the chiefs, except Ulysses, who has always plotted for control—and his spies are in the town at this moment!—will defer to him. With a united front what could Greece not do! The Turk could never enslave her again. With no supreme head, her provinces are like the untied bundle of sticks—easily broken one at a time!"

They watched in silence while the rowers drew nearer across the shallows.

"I did not hope to see you here, Pietro," Mavrocordato said affectionately, as they started toward headquarters.

Gamba answered simply: "She sent me—to guard him if I could."

Ten minutes more and the boat was at the landing.

The instant its bow touched the masonry before lines of picked troops, a single bell rang out from the Greek church. Other iron tongues took it up. The walls shook with rolling salvos of artillery, the firing of muskets and wild music, as the man in the scarlet uniform, colorless and strangely composed amid the tossing agitation, stepped on shore to grasp the hand of Prince Mavrocordato, standing with a long suite of European and Greek officers.

As his gaze swept over the massed soldiery, the frantic people, the women on roofs and balconies, the houses hung with waving carpets,—a rainbow motley of color,—a great shout rolled along the embankments, a tumult mingled with hand-clapping like a silver rain, that drowned all words. Women in the multitude sobbed, and on the balconies little children were held up in stronger arms to see their deliverer. Every eye was on that central figure, with face like the Apollo Belvedere and a step that halted as if with fatigue, but with a look clear and luminous and the shadow of a smile moulding his lips.

"*Panayeia* keep him!" sobbed a weeping woman, and threw herself between the lines of soldiers to kiss the tassel of his sword.

The metropolitan, his robes trailing the ground, lifted before him a silver *eikon* glittering in the sun.

The soldiers presented arms.

The bells broke forth again, and amid their jubilant ringing the wearer of the red uniform passed slowly, with Prince Mavrocordato by his side, into the stone building which rose above the quay—the military headquarters of the revolutionary forces of Western Greece.

CHAPTER LVIII

THE ARCHISTRATEGOS

Missolonghi had become the center of European attention. The announcement of the English Committee which followed Blaquiere's return to England was on every tongue.

The *Courier* had printed a single sneering paragraph in which had been compressed the rancor of William Godwin, the bookseller. This stated that George Gordon was not even in Greece, that he was in reality living in a sumptuous villa on one of the Ionian Islands, with the Contessa Guiccioli, writing a companion poem to "Don Juan." But before the stringent disapproval with which this bald fabrication was received, the *Courier* slunk to shamefaced silence.

Thereafter, in the columns of newspaper, pamphlet and magazine, there was to be distinguished a curious tension of reserve. It was the journalistic obeisance to a growing subterranean yet potent revulsion of feeling. Dallas had soon found himself the recipient of invitations from influential hosts desirous to hear of his visit to Italy. In the clubs the committee's bulletins were eagerly discussed. The loan it solicited found subscriptions and the struggle of the Cross with the Crescent—the cause whose beating heart was now Mis-

solonghi—began to draw the eyes not of London but of England; not of England but of Europe; not of Europe but of the world.

To the company gathered in the citadel of this little marshy port on the Greek sea-shallows, where freedom stirred in the womb of war, outer comment came only after multiplied reverberations. They toiled ceaselessly —a nucleus of hard-working general officers culled from everywhere—planning, drilling, gathering stores, preparing for the inevitable attack of the Turkish armies massing at Lepanto, trying to knit into organization the tawdry elements of brigandage to which centuries of Turkish subjection had reduced a great nation. They labored under a single far-sighted leadership: that of the *archistrategos* of the Greek forces, whose eye seemed sleepless and his brain indefatigable.

Gordon foresaw that Greece's greatest enemy was not the Turks, but her own dissensions. Unification of spirit and authority was necessary before all. When Ulysses, the recalcitrant, sent him an obsequious embassy it bore back a terse answer: "I come to aid a nation, not a faction." Ulysses cursed in his beard and sent Trevanion, for whom he had found more than one cunning use, to seduce the Suliote forces camped within the insurgent lines.

Meanwhile, the money Gordon had brought melted rapidly. He had contributed four hundred pounds a week for rations alone, besides supporting batteries, laboratories and an entire brigade, settling arrears and paying for fortification. However large his private resources, they must soon be exhausted. Could the English loan fail? And if not, would it come in time? If

it was too long delayed, disaster must follow. Discipline would lapse. The diverse elements on the point of coalescing, would fly asunder. The issue would be lost. This thought was a live coal to him night and day.

The rainy season set in with all its rigors. Missolonghi became a pestilential mud-basket beside which the dikes of Holland were a desert of Arabia for dryness. An unknown plague fastened on the bazaar and terrified the townspeople. But in all conditions, Gordon seemed inspirited with a calm cheerfulness.

He thought of Teresa continually. Oddly enough, she stood before him always as he had once seen her on a square in Venice, with moonlight tangling an aureole in her gold hair, her face now not frozen with mute horror —that picture had vanished forever!—but serene with love and abnegation. This face lighted the page as he labored with his correspondence. It went with him on the drenching beach when he directed the landing of cannon sent by the German committee—more dimly seen this day, for a peculiar dizziness and lethargy which he had battled for a fortnight, was upon him.

As he rode back through the rain and the bottomless quagmire, Prince Mavrocordato and Pietro Gamba sat waiting in his room at headquarters. They had been talking earnestly. The outlook was leaden. There had been as yet no news of the expected loan. The lustful eyes of foreign ministers were watching. Ulysses had seized the acropolis of Athens, and his agents were everywhere, seeking to undermine the provisional government. The Suliotes, whose chiefs swarmed in Missolonghi, had begun to demand money and preferment.

But these things, serious as they were, weighed less

heavily upon Prince Mavrocordato's mind than the health of the man he now awaited in that cheerless chamber.

"Another post would do as well," the Greek said gloomily. "Higher ground, out of the marshes. He stays here only at risk to himself. Yet he will listen to no proposal of removal."

"What does he say?" asked Gamba.

"That Missolonghi is the center of Western Greece, the focus-point of European observation. And he ends all discussion by the question: 'If I abandoned this castle to the Turks, what would the partizans of Ulysses say?'"

Gamba was silent. Mavrocordato knit his bushy brows. He knew the answer only too well. And yet the safety of this single individual had come to mean everything. Without him Greece's organization would be chaos, its armies, rabbles.

While he pondered, Gordon entered. He had thrown off his wet clothing below. The shepherd-dog crouched by the door, sprang up with a joyful whine as the newcomer dropped a hand on his head.

Pietro had a sudden vision of his sister as she placed upon him her last injunction—to guard this man's life. He had done all he could. Yet to what avail? Watchfulness might ward steel and lead, but what could combat the unflagging toil, the hourly exposure, the stern denial of creature comfort? His eyes wandered around the damp walls hung with swords, carbines and pistols, to the rough mattress at one side, the spare meal laid waiting the occupant's hasty leisure. In his mind ran the words with which Gordon had replied to one of his

protests: "Here is a stake worth millions such as I am. While I can stand at all, I must stand here." Gamba's thought returned to what the prince was saying:

"Allow me at least to furnish this chamber for your lordship. A bed—"

"Our Suliotes spread their mats on the ground," was the reply, "or on the dirt floor of their miserable huts. I am better couched than they."

"They are used to it," protested the Greek. "They have never known better. They are proof against marsh fever, too." He paused an instant, then added: "I have just learned that the wines I have ordered sent you, have on each occasion been returned to the commissariat."

Gordon's gaze had followed the other's. The food spread there was of the meanest: goat's meat, coarse peasant's bread, a pitcher of sour cider. He was fighting back a vertigo that had been misting his eyes.

"My table costs me exactly forty-five *paras*. That is the allowance of each Greek soldier. I shall live as they live, Prince, no worse, no better."

His voice broke off. He reeled. Mavrocordato sprang and threw an arm about him. Pietro hastened to send Fletcher to the improvised hospital for the physicians.

They came hastily, to find Gordon in a convulsion of fearful strength, though it lasted but a moment. Leeches were put to his temples and consciousness returned. He opened his eyes upon an anxious group of surgeons and staff-officers.

A commotion arose at the instant from the courtyard. Mavrocordato stepped to the window. He made an exclamation. The place was filling with Suliotes—

they were dragging its two cannon from their stations and turning their muzzles against the doors.

An orderly burst into the room. "They are seizing the arsenal!" he cried.

With an oath a Swedish officer leaped down the stair, drawing his sword as he ran. He fell stunned by the blow of a musket-butt.

Wild figures, their faces and splendid attire splashed with mud, gushed in, choked the stairway, and poured into the narrow apartment—to waver and halt abruptly, abashed.

This was not what Trevanion had craftily told them of—not the abode of soft luxury and gem-hung magnificence affected by the foreign *archistrategos* whose wealth was limitless and who sipped wines of liquid pearls, while they, their payments in arrears, drank sharp raisin-juice. What they saw was at strange variance with this picture. A chill stone chamber, a meager repast, uncarpeted floors. A handful of men, each with a drawn sword. These—and a form stretched on a rough mattress, an ensanguined bandage about his forehead, a single gray-haired servant kneeling by his side.

The man on the couch rose totteringly, his hand on his servant's shoulder. He was ghastly white, but his eye flashed and burned as it turned on those semi-barbaric invaders.

Gordon began to speak—not in the broader Romaic, but in their own mountain *patois,* a tongue he had not recalled since long years. The uncouth vocabulary, learned in his youthful adventurous journey for very lack of mental pabulum, had lain in some brain-corner

to spring up now with the spontaneity of inspiration. At the first words they started, looked from one to another, their hands dropped from their weapons. His voice proceeded, gathering steel, holding them like bayonets.

"Am I then to abandon your land to its enemies, because of you, heads of clans, warriors born with arms in your hands, because you yourselves bring all effort to naught? For what do you look? Is it gold? The money I brought has purchased cannon and ammunition. It has furnished a fleet. It has cared for your sick and set rations before your men. Do you demand preferment? You are already chiefs, by birth and by election. Have I taken that away? Rank shall be yours—but do you hope to earn it idly in camp, or fighting as your fathers fought, like your own Botzaris, who fell for his country? Is it for yourselves you ask these things now, or is it for Greece?"

Of the staff officers there gathered none knew the tongue in which he spoke. But they could guess what he was saying. They saw the rude chieftains cower before his challenge. Then, as he went on, under that magnetic gaze they saw the savage brows lighten, the fierce eyes soften and fall.

Gordon's tone had lost its lash. His words dropped gently. He was speaking of those old days when he had slept beneath a Suliote tent and written songs of the freedom for which they now strove. The handful beside him had put up their swords. For a moment not only individual lives, but the fate of Greece itself had hung in the balance. They watched with curious intentness.

As the speaker paused, a burly chieftain, built like a tower, thrust up his hand and turned to the rest, speaking rapidly and with many gesticulations. He pointed to the rough couch, to the coarse fare on the table. The others answered with guttural ejaculations.

All at once he bared his breast, slashed it with his dagger, and touched knee to ground before Gordon's feet. The rest followed his example. Each as he rose, saluted and passed out. Before a dozen had knelt, the rumble of wheels in the courtyard announced that the cannon were being dragged back to their places.

The last Suliote chief retired and Gordon's hand fell from Fletcher's shoulder. The headquarters' surgeon broke the tension:

"His lordship must have quiet!" he warned.

The whiteness had been growing upon Gordon's face. As the officers retired, he sank back upon the couch. Mavrocordato held brandy to his lips, but he shook his head.

He lay very still for a while, his eyes closed, hearing the murmuring voices of the prince and Gamba as they stood with the physicians, feeling on the mattress a shaking hand that he knew was Fletcher's.

A harrowing fear was upon him. The mutiny that had been imminent this hour he had vanquished; he might not succeed again. With resources all might be possible, but his own funds were stretched to the last *para*. And the English loan still hung fire. If he but had the proceeds of a single property—of Rochdale, which he had turned over to the committee in London —he could await the aid which must eventually come. Lacking both, he faced inaction, failure; and now to

cap all, illness threatened him. He almost groaned aloud. Greece must not fail!

There was but one way—to fight and fight soon. Instead of waiting till famine made ally with the enemy, to attack first. To throw his forces, though undisciplined, upon the Turks. Victory would inspirit the friends of the revolution. It would knit closer every segment. It would hasten the loan in England. Might the assault be repelled? No worse, even so, than a defeat without a blow—the shame of a cowardly disintegration!

"Prince—" Gordon summoned all his strength and sat up. "May I ask you to notify my staff-officers to meet me here in an hour? We shall discuss a plan of immediate attack upon Lepanto."

CHAPTER LIX

IN WHICH TERESA MAKES A JOURNEY

"Help me to remember that it is for Greece—and for himself most of all!" That was Teresa's cry through those dreary weeks alone. The chill instinct that had seized her as Gordon held her in that last clasp had never left her. She struggled always with a grim sense of the inevitable. At times she fought the desire to follow, even to Greece, to fold him in her arms, to entreat: "Give up the cause! Come back to me—to love!" Her sending of Pietro had given her comfort. She subsisted upon his frequent letters, upon the rarer, dearer ones of Gordon, and upon the remembrance of the great issue to which she had resigned him.

One day a message came from a great Venetian banking-house. It told of a sum of money held for her whose size startled her. She, who had possessed but a slender marriage-portion, was more than rich in her own right. An accompanying letter from Dallas told her the gift was Gordon's. A wild rush of tears blurred the page as she read.

That night she dreamed a strange dream; yet it was not a dream wholly, for she lay with open eyes staring at the crucifix that hung starkly, a murky outline,

against the wall. Suddenly she started up in the bed. Where the ivory image had glimmered against the ebony was another face, colorless, sharp-etched, a wavering light playing upon it. It was Gordon's, deep-lined, haggard, as though in mute extremity. His eyes looked at her steadily, appealingly.

She held out her arms with a moan. Then the light faded, the phantom merged again into the shadow, and in the darkness she hid her eyes and swayed and wept. She slept no more. A blind terror held her till dawn.

At noon Tita brought her a Pisan paper, with a column of Greek news. It stated that the English loan, on which depended the hopes of the revolutionists, was still unsubscribed in London. The measure would doubtless be too late to stay the descent of Yussuff Pasha's armies. Dissensions were rife at Missolonghi. At Constantinople the sultan, in full divan, had proclaimed George Gordon an enemy to the Porte and offered a *pashawlik* and the three-horse-tailed lance for his head.

The English loan—too late! Its speedy coming had been a certainty in Gordon's mind before his departure. Was it the agony of failure she had seen on the face that looked at her from the darkness? Was he even now crucified on the cross of a despairing crisis?

A quick thought came to her. The sum he had made hers—a fortune, almost a hundred thousand pounds of English money! Might not that serve, at least until the loan came? If she could help him thus!

There was no time for correspondence, banking routine—no time for delays of any sort. It must go now! A daring plan was born in her mind. She could take

it herself, direct to his necessity. Why not? Such a brig as Gordon had chartered was no doubt to be found at Leghorn. Yet she could not make the voyage with but a single servant for escort. To whom could she appeal? To whom else could that far-away cause be near?

A figure flashed before her with the directness of a vision—a man she had seen but once, when with her husband, he had confronted her on a monastery path one dreadful buried day. The friar of San Lazzarro! She recalled the clear deep eyes, the venerable head, the uncompromising honesty of the padre's countenance. He had known the man she loved—had seen his life in that retreat. Was he still there? Would he aid her?

An hour more and she was riding with Tita toward Leghorn harbor. By the next sunrise she was on her way to Venice. Three days later Tita's oar swung her gondola to the wharf of the island of Saint Lazarus.

She stepped ashore and rang a bell at the wall-door beside which, in its stone shrine, stood the leaden image of the Virgin, looking out across the gray lagoon.

The place was very still. Peach-blooms hung their glistening spray above the orchard close, and swallows circled about a peaceful spire from which a slow mellow note was striking. It seemed to Teresa that only yesterday she had stood there face to face with Gordon. With a sudden impulse she sank to her knees before the shrine.

When she rose she was not alone; he who she had prayed might still be within those walls stood near—the same reverend aspect, the benignant brow, the coarse brown robe.

"What do you seek, my daughter?"

As Teresa told her errand, looking into the soluble eyes bent on her, the breeze stirred the young leaves, and the tiny waves lapped the margin-stones in a golden undercurrent of sound. Her words, unstudied and tense with feeling, acquired an unconscious eloquence. A great issue in perilous straits; she, with empty affluence that might save it—but alone, without companion for such a journey.

The friar listened with a growing wonder. In the seclusion of that solitude he had long since heard of the Greek rebellion—had yearned for its success. But it had been a thing remote from his lagoon island. He? To leave the peace of his studies to accompany a woman, to a land in the throes of war? A strange request! Why had she come to him?

"Have I ever seen you before, my daughter?"

Her heart beat heavily. "Yes, Father."

She was leaning against the rock, her face lifted to his. The posture, the pathetic purity of her features, brought recollection.

Padre Somalian's eyes lighted. Since that unforgotten scene on the path, he had often wondered what would be this woman's wedded life, so tragically begun. By her face, she had suffered. Her husband had been old then—doubtless was dead. It was a mark of grace that she came now to him—a holy man—before others. If, alone in the world, she chose to consecrate her wealth thus nobly, well and good. If there had been fault back of that rich marriage, such an act would be in the line of fitting penance.

If there had been fault! The friar's eyes turned

away. He was thinking of the stranger whose brow her husband's blow had marked—of the paper he himself had lifted from beneath the stone. Since the gusty day when he found the abandoned robe, he had prayed unceasingly for that unknown man's soul.

"You will go?"

The question recalled his thought, gone afar.

"My daughter," he demurred, "who am I, bred to quiet and contemplation, to guide you in such an enterprise?"

Tears had come to Teresa's eyes. "Then the hope of Greece will perish! And he—its leader, who has given his all—will fail!"

The padre's look clouded. It was the undying war of Christendom against the idolater, the fight the church militant must wage daily till the reign of the thousand golden years began. Yet noble as was the Grecian struggle, to his mind it had been smirched by a name famed for its evil.

"I would so fair a cause had a better champion!" he said slowly.

Her tears dried away. "And you say that?" she cried, her tone vibrating. "You who saw him, and with whom he lived here?—you?"

He thought her *distrait*. "He here? What do you mean?"

"Do you not know? Father, he who leads the Greeks is the man with whom I stood that day beside this shrine!"

The friar started. Rapid emotions crossed his face. For many a month a sore question had turned itself over and over in his mind. Had he stumbled in his

duty to that man who had come in hopelessness and departed with despair unlightened? Day after day he had seen the misery reflected in the countenance. He knew now that he had been witnessing the efforts of a fallen soul to regain its lost estate—a soul that was now fighting in the ranks of the Cross! In his own self-reproach he had prayed that it might be given him again to hold before his eyes the symbol of the eternal suffering. Was this not the answer to that prayer?

His eyes suffused.

"Wait for me here, my daughter," he said. "I shall not be long. We go together. Who knows if the summons you bring be not the voice of God!"

CHAPTER LX

TRIED AS BY FIRE

The night was still, the air sopped with recent rain, the sky piled with sluggish cloud-strata through whose rifts the half-moon glimpsed obliquely, making the sea-beach that curved above Missolonghi an eerie checker of shine and shade.

Between hill and shore a lean path, from whose edges the cochineal cactus swung its quivers of prickly arrows, shambled across a great flat ledge that jutted from the hill's heel to break abruptly above a deep pool gouged by hungry tempests. On the reed-clustered sand beyond the rock-shelf were disposed a body of men splendidly uniformed, in kirtle and *capote,* standing by their hobbled horses. On the rocky ledge, in the flickering light of a torch thrust into a cleft, were seated their two leaders conversing.

They had ridden far. The object of their coming was the safe delivery of a letter to the one man to whom all Greece looked now. The message was momentous and secret, the errand swift and silent. In Missolonghi, whose lights glowed a mile away, clanging night and day with hurried preparation, none knew of the presence of that company on the deserted shore,

save one of its own number who had ridden, under cover of the dark, into the town's defenses.

"This is a journey that pleases me well, Lambro," averred one of the primates on the rock. "I wish we were well on our way back to the Congress at Salona, and the English *lordos* leading us. What an entry that will be! But what if he doubts your messenger—suspects some trickery of Ulysses? Suppose he will not come out to us?"

"Then the letter must go to him in Missolonghi," said the other, "Mavrocordato or no Mavrocordato. He will come properly guarded," he added, "but he will come."

"Why are you so certain?"

"Because the man I sent to him an hour since is one he must trust. It was his sister the Excellency saved in his youth from the sack. Their father was then a merchant of the bazaar in this same town. Do you not know the tale?" And thereupon he recited the story as he had heard it years before, little dreaming they sat upon the very spot where, on that long ago dawn, the Turkish wands had halted that grim procession. "I would the brother," he closed, "might sometime find the cowardly dog who abandoned her!"

They rose to their feet, for dim forms were coming along the path from the town—a single horseman and a body-guard afoot. "It is the *archistrategos*," both exclaimed.

The younger hastily withdrew; the other advanced a step to meet the man who dismounted and came forward.

Gordon's face in the torchlight was worn and hag-

gard, for the inward fever had never left him since that fierce convulsion—nature's protest against unbearable conditions. Day by day, with the same unyielding will he had fought his weakness, pushing forward the plans for the assault on Lepanto, slaving with the gunners, drilling musket-men, much of the day in the saddle, and filching from the hours of his rest, time for his committee correspondence, bearing always that burning coal of anxiety—the English loan which did not come.

The primate saw this look, touched with surprise as Gordon caught the stir of horses and men from the further gloom. He bowed profoundly as he drew forth a letter.

"I regret to have brought Your Illustrious Excellency from your quarters," he said in Romaic, "but my orders were specific."

Gordon stepped close to the torch and opened the letter. The primate drew back and left him on the rock, a solitary figure in the yellow glare, watched from one side by two score of horsemen, richly accoutred, standing silent—on the other by a rough body-guard of fifty, in ragged garments, worn foot-wear, but fully armed.

Once—twice—three times Gordon read, slowly, strangely deliberate.

A shiver ran over him, and he felt the torchlight on his face like a sudden hot wave. The letter was a summons to Salona, where assembled in Congress the chiefs and primates of the whole Morea—but it was far more than this; in its significant circumlocution, its meaning

diplomatic phrases, lay couched a clear invitation that seemed to transform his blood to a volatile ichor.

Gordon's eyes turned to the shadow whence came the shifting and stamping of horses—then to the lights of the fortifications he had left. He could send back these silent horsemen, refuse to go with them, return to Missolonghi, to his desperate waiting for the English loan, to the hazardous attack on Lepanto, keeping faith with the cause, falling with it, if needs be; or—*he could wear the crown of Greece!*

The outlines of the situation had flashed upon him as clearly as a landscape seen by lightning. The letter in his hand was signed by a name powerful in three chanceleries. The courts of Europe, aroused by the experiment of the American colonies, wished no good of republicanism. Names had been buzzing in State closets: Jerome Bonaparte, Leopold of Saxe-Coburg. But Greece had gone too far for that; if a foreign ruler be given her, he must be one acceptable to the popular mind. Governmental eyes turned now to *him!* He, the despised of England, a king! The founder of a fresh dynasty, the first emperor of New Greece!

Standing there, feeling his heart beat to his temples, a weird sensation came to him. There had been a time in his youth when he had camped upon that shore, when on that very rock he had struck an individual blow against Turkish barbarity. Now the hum of the voices beyond turned into a wild Suliote stave roared about a fire and he felt again the same chill, prescient instinct that had possessed him when he said: "It is as though this spot—that town yonder—were tangled in my destiny!" Was this not the fulfilment,

that on the spot where he had penned his first immortal lines for Greece, should be offered him her throne?

A mental barb stung him. It was for Greek freedom he had sung then—the ancient freedom tyranny had defiled. And would this mean true liberty? The Moslem would be cast out, but for what? A *coup d'état!* A military dictatorship, bolstered by suzerain arms! The legislative government, with the hopes of Mavrocordato, of all the western country, fallen into the dust! Greece a puppet kingdom, paying compensation in self-respect to self-aggrandizing cabinets.

But a Greece with himself upon the throne!

Far-off siren voices seemed to call to him from the darkness. What would be his? World-fame—not the bays he despised, but the laurel. A seat above even social convention, unprecedented, secure. A power nationally supreme, in State certainly, in Church perhaps—power to override old conditions, to re-create his own future. To sever old bonds with the sword of royal prerogative. Eventually, *to choose his queen!*

A fit of trembling seized him. He felt Teresa's arms about him—warm, human, loving arms—her lips on his, sweet as honeysuckle after rain. For a moment temptation flung itself out of the night upon him. Not such as he had grappled with when she had come to him on the square in Venice. Not such as he had felt when Dallas told him of the portrait hidden from Ada's eyes. It was a temptation a thousandfold stronger and more insidious. It shook to its depths the mystic peace that had come to him on the deck of the *Hercules* after that

last parting. It was as though all the old craving, the bitterness, the cruciate longing of his love rose at once to a combat under which the whole mind of the man bent and writhed in anguish.

Gordon's face, as it stared out from the torch-flare across the gloomy gulf, showed to the man who waited near-by no sign of the struggle that wrung his soul, and that, passing at length, left him blanched and exhausted like one from whose veins a burning fever has ebbed suddenly.

The primate came eagerly from the shadow as Gordon turned and spoke:

"Say to those who sent you that what they propose is impossible—"

"Illustrious Excellency!"

"—that I came hither for Greek independence, and if this cause shall fall, I choose to bury myself in its ruins."

The other was dumb from sheer astonishment. He knew the proposal the letter contained. Had not he, Lambro, primate of Argos, nurtured the plan among the chiefs? Had not the representative of a great power confided in his discretion when he sent him with that letter? And now when the whole Morea was ready—when prime ministers agreed—the one man to whom it might be offered, refused the crown! He swallowed hard, looking at the letter which had been handed back to him.

Before he recovered his wits, Gordon had walked uncertainly to his horse, mounted, and was riding toward the town, his body-guard streaming out behind him, running afoot.

As his fellow officer approached him, Lambro swore an oath:

"By the Virgin! You shall return to Salona without me. I stay here and fight with the English *lordos!*"

He rode into Missolonghi that night, and with him were twenty of his men.

CHAPTER LXI

THE RENUNCIATION

Gordon entered his bleak room with mind strangely numbed. Gamba, now acting as his adjutant, was waiting, and him he dismissed without dictating his usual correspondence. The struggle he had fought had bitten deeply into his fund of physical resistance. A tremor was in his hands—a cold sweat on his forehead.

Riding, with the ashes of denial on his lips, it had come to him that in this temptation he had met his last and strongest enemy. It had found him in his weakness, and that weakness it would not be given him to surmount. The sword was wearing out the scabbard. His own hand should never lead the Greece he loved to its freedom—should never marshal it at its great installation. None but himself knew how fearfully illness had grown upon him or with what difficult pain he had striven to conceal its havoc. Only he himself had had no illusions. He knew to-night that the final decision had lain between the cause and his life itself. The one thing which might have knit up his ravelled health—the abandonment of this miasma-breeding town for the wholesome unvitiated hill air of Salona, of the active campaign for passive trust to foreign dictation—

he had thrust from him. And in so doing, he had made the last great choice.

"Lyon!" he said—"Lyon!" The shepherd-dog by the hearth raised his head. His eyes glistened. His tail beat the stone. He whined uneasily as his master began to pace the floor, up and down, his step uneven, forcing his limbs to defy their dragging inertia.

As the long night-watch knelled wearily away, drop by drop Gordon drank this last and bitter cup of renunciation. Love and life he put behind him, facing unshrinkingly the grisly specter that looked at him from the void.

He thought of Teresa singing to her lonely harp in a far-off fragrant Italian garden. His gaze turned to a closet built into the corner of the room. In it was a manuscript—five additional cantos of "Don Juan" written in that last year at Pisa, the completion of the poem, on which he had lavished infinite labor. He remembered an hour when her voice had said: "One day you will finish it—more worthily." Had he done so? Had he redeemed those earlier portions which, though his ancient enemy had declared them "touched with immortality," yet rang with cadences long since grown painful to him? The world might judge!

He thought of his Memoirs, completed, which he had sent from Italy by Dallas for the hand of Tom Moore in London. These pages were a brief for the defense, submitted to the Supreme Bench of Posterity.

"For Ada!" he muttered. "The smiles of her youth have been her mother's, but the tears of her maturity shall be mine!"

His life for Greece! And giving it, it should be his

to strike at least one fiery blow, to lead one fierce clash of arms! He looked where a glittering helmet hung on the wall, elaborately wrought and emblazoned, bearing his own crest and armorial motto: "Crede Gordon"—a garish, ostentatious gewgaw whose every fragile line and over-decoration was a sneer. It had been brought him in a satin casket by the hand of the suave Paolo, the last polished sting of his master, the Count Guiccioli. He would bring to naught that gilded mockery of hatred that scoffed at his purpose! A few more hours and preparations would be completed for the attack on Lepanto. To storm that stronghold, rout the Turkish forces, sound this one clear bugle-call that would ring on far frontiers—and so, the fall of the curtain.

At length he sat down at the table and in the candlelight began to write. What he wrote in that hour has been preserved among the few records George Gordon left behind him at Missolonghi.

"My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of love are done;
The worm, the canker and the grief
Are mine alone!

The hope, the fear, the jealous care,
The exalted portion of the pain
And power of love, I cannot share.
I wear the chain.

Yet see—the sword, the flag, the field!
Glory and Greece around me see!
The Spartan, borne upon his shield,
Was not more free.

Awake! (not Greece—she *is* awake!)
Awake my spirit! Think through whom
Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake,
And then strike home!

Up to the battle! There is found
A soldier's grave—for thee the best;
Then look around and choose thy ground,
And take thy rest!"

The pen fell from his fingers. A sudden icy breath seemed to congeal from the air. He rose—tried to walk, but felt his limbs failing him. He fixed his eyes upon a bright spot on the wall, fighting desperately against the appalling faintness that was enshrouding him. It gyrated and swam before his vision—a burnished helmet. Should the battle after all evade him? Was it denied him even to fall upon the field? A roaring rose in his ears.

He steadied himself against the table and shut his teeth. The quiver of convulsion was upon him again—and the movement against Lepanto began to-morrow! It must not come—not yet, *not yet!* The very life of the cause was wound in his. He would not yield!

The shepherd-dog had risen whining from the hearth; Gordon felt the rough tongue licking his hand—felt but could not see. He staggered toward the couch. Darkness had engulfed him, a black giddiness from whose depths he heard faintly a frantic barking and hurried footsteps on the stair.

CHAPTER LXII

GORDON GOES UPON A PILGRIMAGE

Easter afternoon and all Missolonghi was on the streets. But there were no festivities, no firing of guns nor decorations. A pall had settled on the town, a pall reflected in a sky dun-colored and brooding storm.

To-day had been fixed upon for the march against Lepanto, but now war was forgotten. The wheels of movement had stopped like those of some huge machine whose spring of action has lost its function. Silent soldiers patrolled the empty bazaar and the deserted docks. The crowds that thronged the pavements—Suliotes, their wild faces softened by grief unconcealed, gloomy officers of infantry and artillery, weeping women, and grave priests of the Greek church—conversed in low tones. Even the arrival of a new vessel in the harbor had gone unnoticed. Observation centered on the stone building fronting the shallows, from whose guarded precincts from time to time an aide issued with news which spread speedily through the desponding populace—the military headquarters where the foreign *archistrategos* lay sick unto death.

Through the crowds, from the wharf, three figures passed in haste. One was a gigantic Venetian servant, staggering beneath the burden of an iron-bound chest.

Small wonder its weight taxed even his herculean strength, for besides bills of exchange for the sum nine times over, it contained ten thousand pounds in English sovereigns. His huge form made a way for the two who followed him: a venerable Armenian friar, bareheaded and sandalled, and a woman heavily veiled, whose every nerve was strung with voiceless suffering.

Mercifully a portion of the truth had come to Teresa at Zante, and in the few intervening hours, an eternity of suspense, she had gained an unnatural self-control. Up to the last moment of possibility she had fought the dread sense of the inevitable that was rising to shut out her whole horizon of future; but before the ominous hush of the multitudes, hope had died within her. She seemed to hear Mary Shelley crying through the voice of that Pisan storm: "O, I am afraid—afraid—afraid!"

Yet, even in her despair, as she threaded the press with the friar, she felt an anguished pride and thankfulness. The man on whose life these awe-struck thousands trembled—the all that he had been to her! And she had not come too late.

In the cheerless stone room, Mavrocordato, Pietro Gamba and the men of medicine watched beside the couch on which Gordon lay. After a long period of unconsciousness he had opened his eyes.

A moment he looked about the familiar apartment, slowly realizing. He saw the tears on Gamba's cheeks, the grave sorrow that moulded the prince's face. In that moment he did not deceive himself.

His look drew Mavrocordato—a look in which was a question, but no fear.

The other bent over him. "An hour, they think," he said gently.

Gordon closed his eyes. Such a narrow span between this life and the unbridged gulf, between the old questioning and the great solution. An hour, and he should test the worth of Dallas' creed, should know if the friar of San Lazzarro had been right. An hour, and life would be behind him, with its errors ended, its longings quenched.

Its largest endeavor had been defeated: that was the closest sting. In his weakness all else sank away beside the thought that he had tried—and failed. Even the one blow he might not strike. The nation was in straits, the loan delayed, the campaign unopened. He caught the murmurs of the crowds in the courtyard. His lips framed words: "My poor Greece! Who shall lead you now?"

Yet he had done his best, given his all, even his love. She, Teresa, would know and hold his effort dear because she loved him. But there was another woman—in England—who had hated and despised him. He had piled upon her the mountain of his curse, and that curse had been forgiveness. Must her memory of him be always bitterness? In the fraying fringe of life past resentments were worn pitifully small. Should he go without one tenderer word to Annabel?

He tried to lift himself. "Fletcher!" he said aloud.

The old valet, shaken with emotion, came forward as the others turned away.

"Listen, Fletcher. You will go back to England. Go to my wife—you will see Ada—tell my sister—say—"

His voice had become indistinct and the phrases ran together. Only fragmentary words could be distinguished: "Ada"—"my child"—"my sister"—"Hobhouse." His speech flashed into coherence at last as he ended: "Now I have told you all."

"My dear lord," sobbed the valet, "I have not understood a word!"

Pitiful distress overspread Gordon's features. "Not understood?" he said with an effort. "Then it is too late!" He sank back. Fletcher, blind with grief, left the room.

A subdued commotion rose unwontedly beneath the windows. Mavrocordato spoke hurriedly to an orderly who had just come to the door. "Have they not been told?" he whispered. "What is the matter?"

Through the closing darkness, Gordon's ear caught a part of the low reply. "What did he say?" he asked.

Mavrocordato approached the couch. "Some one has come in a vessel bringing a vast fortune for Greece."

The dimming eyes flared up with joyful exultation. The cause was not lost then. The armament could go on—the fleet be strengthened, the forces held together, till the loan came—till another might take his place.

A sound of footsteps fell on the stair—there was a soft knock. The orderly's voice demanded the password.

If there was reply, none of the watchers heard it. Gordon had lifted himself on his elbow, his head turned with a sudden, strange expectancy. "The password?" he said distinctly,—"it is here!" He laid his hand upon his heart.

A sobbing cry answered, and a woman crossed swiftly to the couch and knelt beside it.

A great light came to Gordon's countenance. "Teresa!" he gasped. "Teresa—my love!"

The effort had brought exhaustion. He sank back, feeling his head pillowed upon her breast. He smiled and closed his eyes.

A friar had followed her into the room. Mavrocordato beckoned the wondering surgeons to the door. They passed out, and young Gamba, after one glance at his sister, followed. The friar drew near the couch, crucifix in hand, his lips moving silently. The door closed.

After the one cry which had voiced that beloved name, Teresa had made no sound. She cradled Gordon's head in her arms, watching his face with a fearful tenderness. From the court came the hushed hum of many people, from the stair low murmur of voices; behind her she heard Padre Somalian's breathed prayer. Her heart was bleeding with a bitter pain. Now and again she touched the damp brow, like blue-veined marble, and warmed the cold hands between her own as she had done in that direful ride when her arms had held that body, bleeding from a kriss.

The day was declining and the air filled with shadows. The storm that had hung in the sky had begun to mutter in rolling far-off thunder, and the sun, near to setting, made a lurid flame at the horizon-bars. Gordon stirred and muttered, and at length opened his eyes upon the red glare. He heard the echoes of the clouds, like distant artillery.

With the energy of delirium he sat up. He began to

talk wildly, in a singular jumble of languages: "Forward! Forward! Courage—strike for Greece! It is victory!"

The hallucination of weakness had given him his supreme desire. He was leading the assault on Lepanto.

"My son,"—the friar's voice spoke—"there are other victories than of war. There is that of the agony and the cross."

The words seemed to strike through the delirium of the fevered fantasies and calm them. The dying man's eyes fastened on the speaker with a vague inquiry. There was silence for a moment, while outside the chamber a grizzled servant knelt by a group of officers, his seamed face wet with tears, and from the courtyard rose the plaintive howl of a dog.

Through the deepening abyss of Gordon's senses the crumbling memory was groping for an old recollection that stirred at the question. Out of the maze grew sentences which a voice like that had once said: "Every man bears a cross of despair to his Calvary. He who bore the heaviest saw beyond. What did He say?—"

The failing brain struggled to recall. What did He say? He saw dimly the emblem which the friar's hand held—an emblem that had hung always somewhere, somewhere in a fading Paradise of his. It expanded, a sad dark Calvary against olive foliage gray as the ashes of the Gethsemane agony—the picture of the eternal suffering of the Prince of Peace.

"Not—my will, but—Thine!"

The words fell faintly from the wan lips, scarce a murmur in the stirless room. Gordon's form, in Teresa's clasp, seemed suddenly to grow chill. She did

not see the illumination that transformed the friar's face, nor hear the door open to her brother and Mavrocordato. She was deaf to all save the moan of her stricken love, blind to all save that face that was slipping from life and her.

Gordon's hand fumbled in his breast, and drew something forth that fell from his nerveless fingers on to the bed—a curling lock of baby's hair and a worn fragment of paper on which was a written prayer. She understood, and, lifting them, laid them against his lips.

His eyes smiled once into hers and his face turned wholly to her, against her breast.

"Now," he whispered, "I shall go—to sleep."

A piteous cry burst from Teresa's heart as the friar leaned forward. But there was no answer. George Gordon's eternal pilgrimage had begun.

CHAPTER LXIII

THE GREAT SILENCE

Blaquiere stood beside Teresa in the windowed chamber which had been set apart for her, overlooking the courtyard.

All in that Grecian port knew of her love and the purpose that had upheld her in her journey. To the forlorn town her wordless grief seemed a tender intimate token of a loss still but half comprehended. It had surrounded her with an unvarying thoughtfulness that had fallen gently across her anguish. She had listened to the muffled rumble of cannon that the wind brought across the marshes from the stronghold of Patras, where the Turks rejoiced. She had seen the palled bier, in the midst of Gordon's own brigade, borne on the shoulders of the officers of his corps to the Greek church, to lie in state beside the remains of Botzaris—had seen it borne back to its place amid the wild mourning of half-civilized tribesmen and the sorrow of an army.

The man she had loved had carried into the Great Silence a people's worship and a nation's tears. Now as she looked out across the massed troops with arms at rest—across the crowded docks and rippling shallows to the sea, where two ships rode the swells side by side, she

hugged this thought closer and closer to her heart. One of these vessels had borne her hither and was to take her back to Italy. The other, a ship-of-the-line, had brought the man who stood beside her, with the first installment of the English loan. It was to bear to an English sepulture the body of the exile to whom his country had denied a living home. Both vessels were to weigh with the evening tide.

Blaquiere, looking at the white face that gazed seaward, remembered another day when he had heard her singing to her harp from a dusky garden. He knew that her song would never again fall with such a cadence.

At length he spoke, looking down on the soldiery and the people that waited the passing to the water-side of the last cortège.

"I wonder if he sees—if he knows, as I know, Contessa, what the part he acted here shall have done for Greece? In his death faction has died, and the enmities of its chiefs will be buried with him forever!"

Her eyes turned to the sky, reddening now to sunset. "I think he knows," she answered softly.

Padre Somalian's voice behind them intervened: "We must go aboard presently, my daughter."

She turned, and as the friar came and stood looking down beside Blaquiere, passed out and crossed the hall to the room wherein lay her dead.

She approached the bier—a rude chest of wood upon rough trestles, a black mantle serving for pall. At its head, laid on the folds of a Greek flag, were a sword and a simple wreath of laurel. A dull roar shook the air outside—the minute-gun from the grand battery, firing a last salute—and a beam of fading sun-

light glanced through the window and turned to a fiery globe a glittering helmet on the wall.

Gently, as though a sleeping child lay beneath it, she withdrew the pall and white shroud from the stainless face. She looked at it with an infinite yearning, while outside the minute-gun boomed and the great bell of the Greek church tolled slowly. Blaquiere's words were in her mind.

"*Do* you know, my darling?" she whispered. "Do you know that Greece lives because my heart is dead?"

She took from her bosom the curl of flaxen hair and the fragment of paper that had fallen from his chilling fingers and put them in his breast. Then stooping, she touched in one last kiss the unanswering marble of his lips.

At the threshold she looked back. The golden glimmer from the helmet fell across the face beneath it with an unearthly radiance. A touch of woman's pride came to her—the pride that sits upon a broken heart.

"How beautiful he was!" she said in a low voice. "Oh, God! How beautiful he was!"

CHAPTER LXIV

"OF HIM WHOM SHE DENIED A HOME, THE GRAVE"

Greece was nevermore a vassal of the Turk. In the death of the *archistrategos* who had so loved her cause, the chieftains put aside quarrels and buried private ambitions—all save one. In the stone chamber at Missolonghi wherein that shrouded form had lain, the Suliote chiefs swore fealty to Mavrocordato and the constitutional government as they had done to George Gordon.

Another had visited that chamber before them. This was a dark-bearded man in Suliote dress, who entered it unobserved while the body of the man he had so hated lay in state in the Greek church. Trevanion forced the sealed door of the closet and examined the papers it contained. When he took horse for Athens, he bore with him whatever of correspondence and memoranda might be fuel for the conspiracy of Ulysses—and a roll of manuscript, the completion of "Don Juan," which he tore to shreds and scattered to the four winds on a flat rock above a deep pool a mile from the town. He found Ulysses a fugitive, deserted by his faction, and followed him to his last stronghold, a cavern in Mount Parnassus.

But fast as Trevanion went, one went as fast. This

was a young Greek who had ridden from Salona to Missolonghi with one Lambro, primate of Argos. Beneath the beard and Suliote attire he recognized Trevanion, and his brain leaped to fire with the memory of a twin sister and the fearful fate of the sack to which she had once been abandoned. From an ambush below the entrance of Ulysses' cave, he shot his enemy through the heart.

On the day Trevanion's sullen career was ended, along the same highway which Gordon had traversed when he rode to Newstead on that first black home-coming, a single carriage followed a leaden casket from London to Nottinghamshire.

In its course it passed a noble country-seat, the hermitage of a woman who had once burned an effigy before a gay crowd in Almack's Assembly Rooms. Lady Caroline Lamb, diseased in mind as in body, discerned the procession from the terrace. As the hearse came opposite she saw the crest upon the pall. She fainted and never again left her bed.

The cortège halted at Hucknall church, near Newstead Abbey, and there the earthly part of George Gordon was laid, just a year from the hour he had bidden farewell to Teresa in the Pisan garden, where now a lonely woman garnered her deathless memories.

At the close of the service the two friends who had shared that last journey—Dallas, now grown feeble, and Hobhouse, recently knighted and risen to political prominence—stood together in the lantern-lighted porch.

"What of the Westminster chapter?" asked Dallas. "Will they grant the permission?"

A shadow crossed the other's countenance. Popular feeling had undergone a great revulsion, but clerical enmity was outspoken and undying. He thought of a bitter philippic he had heard in the House of Lords from the Bishop of London. His voice was resentful as he answered:

"The dean has refused. The greatest poet of his age and country is denied even a tablet on the wall of Westminster Abbey!"

The kindly eyes under their white brows saddened. Dallas looked out through the darkness where gloomed the old Gothic towers of Newstead, tenantless, save for their raucous colonies of rooks.

"The greatest poet of his age and country!" he repeated slowly. "After all, we can be satisfied with that."

* * * * * * *

AFTERMATH

Springs quickened, summers sped their hurrying blooms, autumns hung scarlet flags in the coppice, winters fell and mantled glebe and moor. Yet the world did not forget.

There came an April day when the circumstance of a sudden shower set down from an open carriage at the porch of Newstead Abbey a slender girl of seventeen, who had been visiting at near-by Annesley.

Waiting, in the library, the passing of the rain, the visitor picked up a book from the table. It was "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage."

For a time she read with tranquil interest—then suddenly startled:

> "Is thy face like thy mother's, my fair child!
> Ada! sole daughter of my house and heart?
> When last I saw thy young blue eyes they smiled,
> And then we parted,—not as now we part,
> But with a hope.—"

She looked for the name of its author and paled. Thereafter she sat with parted lips and tremulous, long breathing. The master of the house entered to find an unknown guest reading in a singular rapt absorption.

Her youth and interest beckoned his favorite topic. He had been one of the strangers who, year by year in increasing numbers, visited the little town of Hucknall —travelers who, speaking the tongue in which George Gordon had written, trod the pave of the quiet church with veneration. He had purchased Newstead and had taken delight in gathering about him in those halls mementoes of the man whose youth had been spent within them.

While the girl listened with wide eyes on his face, he told her of the life and death of the man who had written the book. He marvelled while he talked, for it appeared that she had been reared in utter ignorance of his writings, did not know that he had lived beneath that very roof, nor that he lay buried in the church whose spire could be seen from the mole. He waxed eloquent as he told her how the gilded rank and fashion of London had found comfort in silence—how Tom Moore, long since become one of its complacent satellites, had read its wishes well; how he had stood in a locked room

and given the smug seal of his approbation while secret flame destroyed the self-justification of a dead man's name, the Memoirs which had been a last bequest to a living daughter.

The shower passed, the sun came out rejoicing—still the master of the Abbey talked. When he had finished he showed his listener a portrait, painted by the American, Benjamin West. When she turned from this, her face was oddly white; she was thinking of another portrait hidden by a curtain, which had been one of the unsolved mysteries of her childhood.

On her departure her host drove with her to Hucknall church, and standing in the empty chancel she read the marble tablet set into the wall:

IN THE VAULT BENEATH
LIE THE REMAINS OF

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

THE AUTHOR OF "CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE".
HE WAS BORN IN LONDON ON THE 22nd OF JANUARY, 1788.
HE DIED AT MISSOLONGHI IN WESTERN GREECE, ON THE 19th OF APRIL, 1824,
ENGAGED IN THE GLORIOUS ATTEMPT TO RESTORE THAT
COUNTRY TO HER ANCIENT FREEDOM AND RENOWN.

HIS SISTER PLACED THIS TABLET TO HIS MEMORY.

A long time the girl stood silent, her features quivering with some strange emotion of reproach and pain. Behind her she heard her escort's voice. He was repeat-

ing lines from the book she had been reading an hour before:

"My hopes of being remembered are entwined
With my land's language: if too fond and far
These aspirations in their scope inclined—
If my fame should be, as my fortunes are,
Of hasty blight, and dull Oblivion bar
My name from out the temple where the dead
Are honored by the nations—let it be—
And light the laurels on a loftier head!
Meantime, I seek no sympathies, nor need;
The thorns which I have reaped are of the tree
I planted. They have torn me—and I bleed.

My task is done—my song hath ceased—my theme
Has died into an echo; it is fit
The spell should break of this protracted dream.
The torch shall be extinguished which hath lit
My midnight lamp—and what is writ, is writ.
Farewell! a word that must be, and hath been—
A sound which makes us linger;—yet—farewell!
Ye! who have traced the Pilgrim to the scene
Which is his last, if in your memories dwell
A thought which once was his, if on ye swell
A single recollection, not in vain
He wore his sandal-shoon, and scallop-shell!"

Could he whose ashes lay beneath that recording stone have seen the look on the girl's face as she listened—could he have seen her shrink that night from a woman's contained kiss—he would have known that his lips had been touched with prophecy when he said:

"The smiles of her youth have been her mother's, but the tears of her maturity shall be mine!"

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